Eightfold Path for the Householder

Ten talks

by Jack Kornfield

Transcribed and edited from audio tape by Evelyn Sweeney

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Contents

- Right Understanding
- Right Attitude
- Right Speech
- Right Action
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Concentration
- Right Awareness
- Hindrances of the Householder (I)
- Hindrances of the Householder (II)

Notes:

(1) From Access to Insight Home Page

> The Eightfold Path for the Householder [140k] by Jack Kornfield, 1995
> *"A series of ten talks, transcribed from audio tape, on the practice of the Eightfold Path, particularly geared to householders. There is a talk on each of the eight path factors, plus two concerning the five mental hindrances."*

(2) From Bill's Buddhist Page

> *"This piece comes here through the efforts of Dharma Net. These ten lectures (over 5,000 lines of text) were transcribed by Dharma Net and were released for non-profit use in spreading the Dharma. In his own uniquely accessible manner Mr. Kornfield teaches us, as average citizens, how we can practice the Dharma and maintain our everyday lives. In contrast to many Buddhist writings which concentrate on the practice of monastics, Mr. Kornfield's approach is refreshing, and very easy to read and learn from. Anyone who is interested in Buddhism should read **Jack Kornfield's Householder Series"***.
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> ****** The HTML files of this book were taken from Bill's Buddhist Page.***

Distribution Agreement

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Householder Series:
The Eightfold Noble Path
-- Right Understanding

This meditation practice, as many of you have done with this day of sitting and walking, was actually quite a lot. Some people will start with a 20-minute sitting and do that for a number of months, or go to a class and have some instruction and sit for a little bit. There are people who also will come to a ten-day retreat. We've even had a few kind of unusual people sign up for a three-month retreat who had never meditated before, and say, "Well, I guess I'll just do it." But as you can discover, even in just one day of sitting, though some things are interesting and you learn some from it, it's also not so easy. There aren't a lot of distractions and diversions here. It's pretty simple. All that's really left for you in this place is your own body and mind, and there's not a lot to take one away from that.

What is the essence of meditation practice? Here is a story. After the Buddha was enlightened he was walking down the road in a very happy state. He was supposed to have been quite a handsome prince before going off to be a monk. So here's this handsome prince now recently enlightened, wearing golden robes and obviously quite happy, and very special from all accounts. And he met some people and they said, "You seem very special. What are you, are some kind of an angel or a deva?" He seemed inhuman in some way. "No." "Well, are you some kind of a god then?" "No." "Well, then are you some kind of a wizard or magician?" "No," he replied. "Well, are you a man?" "No," he said. "Then what are you?" And he answered, "I am awake."

And in those three words --"I am awake"-- he gave the whole teaching which Buddhism contains. To be a Buddha is to be one who has awakened, awakened to the nature of life and death and the world in which we live, awakened to the body and mind. So the purpose of practicing meditation, the Buddhist and other traditions, is not to become a meditator, or a spiritual person, or a Buddhist, or to join something. Rather, it is to understand this capacity we have as humans to awaken.

What is that which we can awaken to, what is the Dharma which we can awaken to? *Dharma* is the Sanskrit word and *Dhamma* is the Pali word which refers to that which is universal, to the laws of the universe, teachings which describe it. The Dharma as a law is that the way things work are always here to be discovered; they're quite immediate.

There's a story of a pious man who very much believed in God. One day, at the place where he dwelled, it started to rain heavily and it rained and rained, and a big flood came. He went from the first floor to the second floor of his house and the water rose until he was on the roof. Someone rowed by and said, "Get in, my friend, I'll save you; the water is rising." He said, "No, I believe in

God; I really have faith; I believe." So he sent the rowboat away. It rained more and the water got all the way up to his neck. Another rowboat came by, picking up people. "Get in, my friend, I'll save you." "No, thank you. I have trust. I have lived my whole life. I believe in God; no need." The rowboat went away. It got up to his nose so he could just barely breathe. And a helicopter came over and lowered down a rope. "Come up, my friend, I'll save you." "No, thank you. I believe, I have faith, I trust." So the helicopter went away.

It rained some more and he drowned. He goes to heaven after that. Soon after that he gets an interview with God. So he goes in, and he sits down and pays his respects, and then he says, "You know, I just don't understand. Here I was your faithful servant. I was so trusting, and prayed, and so believing, and I just don't understand what happened to me." And he recounts all of his circumstances. "Where were you when I needed you?" God looks up and kind of scratches his head and says, "I don't understand it either. I sent you two rowboats and a helicopter."

We wait for God to come in some big flash or our spiritual awakening to be some wonderful other worldly experience. What the Dharma is, and what we can awaken to, is the truth that is here when we leave our fantasies and memories and things behind and come into the present.

What are these laws, what is it? First, there is the Dharma which is described as the law of cause and effect, or Karma, which means by one teacher's definition, "To keep it simple, 'karma' means you don't get away with nothin'." But in a more explicit way, it means that we become what we do, or we create how our future will be. For example, if we practice being angry all the time, in a while, when a situation arises, that will be our response to it, and it will create that in other people; that will be the kind of society we end up in. If we practice being loving, that becomes the way of what will happen to us in the future.

When the Buddha spoke to people who were interested in happiness -- which some people are -- they said, "How can we be happy?" He said, "Well, one way is to understand the law of karma. If you cultivate generosity, kindness, awareness and giving. you will be happy because you'll learn that it's pleasant, and also the way that karma works is that your world will become more of a cycling rather than fear and holding. You will discover happiness in this generosity."

He said, "If you're kind to people, if you maintain a basic level of non-harming -- what's called Virtue -- if your words are honest and helpful, if your actions are truthful and helpful and based on kindness, your world will start to become kind. Inside you'll feel kinder and happier; outside people will treat you that way. The law of Karma is one of the first things you observe if you practice mindfulness and awareness. This is one thing you can discover through practice.

A second thing you can discover is that there are two places that we can live. There are many places, but one is to live in our fantasy, in our thoughts about things; and the other is to be more here in our bodies, in our eyes, our nose, in our senses, and the direct experience of things.

> For me -- says Don Juan -- the world is incredible because it is stupendous, mysterious, awesome, unfathomable. My interest has been to convince you that you must learn to make every act count. You must learn to assume responsibility for being here in this

> marvelous world, in this marvelous time, for in fact you will learn that you are only here for too short a time, a very short while, too short for witnessing all the marvels of it.

So one way is to be kind of lost in thoughts and fantasies, and the other is that while we have this life, to come into it; to live in our physical bodies, to be aware of the senses; to open, to see what they have to teach us. When we do that and we pay attention, we start to see some of the characteristics of the Dharma or the life in which we live.

One characteristic is impermanence.

> Thus shall you think of this fleeting world -- it says in one Buddhist sutra -- a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream, a flash of lightning in a summer cloud, an echo, a rainbow, a phantom and a dream.

That as you look, the more closely you observe, the more you realize that everything you look at is in change. Seeing changes, hearing changes, smelling, tasting and physical sensations are changing; all the experiences in the body and mind, all the experiences of the senses change.

It seems solid -- That's the illusion of *santati*. -- It's like a movie. And when you watch the screen and get caught in the story, it seems like it's very real. But when you turn your attention to the projector, or slow it down, or focus your awareness very carefully, you start to see that it's one frame after another, one appearing and dissolving and the next arising.

It's so for our life; it's really a process of change. That's so because things don't last. If you have something that lasts in your life, please raise your hand. Has anyone gotten any mental states of any kind to last very long? Someone once raised a hand and said, "Yes, ignorance. It's lasted my whole life." But basically it's change. You sit here for one day -- you don't even have to be a very adept meditator to get the point that it moves all the time, that it changes. And because things don't last, if we're attached to them being a certain way, what happens? This is one of the laws. What happens? We suffer, or we get disappointed -- not because we should. You can be attached as much as you like, but even though you're attached, does it stop it from changing? You have a nice mental state and you try and hold on to it, does it last anyway?

You start to see the laws of things, that things are impermanent, that attachment doesn't work, and that there must be some other way. There is actually what Alan Watts called, "the wisdom of insecurity," the ability to flow with things, to see them as a changing process. You also see not only are they impermanent and ungraspable, but that there's suffering if we're attached to them, and that there's pain as well as pleasure in this world; it's part of what we were born into. If you decide to get off on this planet and get one of these things with ten little things on the end here and ten little things on the end there, that grows for awhile, and that you put old dead plants and animals in, and mush them up in order to get it to kind of move around -- if you choose one of these things which you have, it's too late already. What is the nature of it? It grows up, it grows old, it dies. Sometimes it gets sick, sometimes it feels good, sometimes it hurts; there's pleasure and pain in it. Anybody have one that doesn't hurt sometimes? If you don't want that, you've got to go to another planet

because it's not the way things are here.

You sit, and you say, "I'm just going to be with my body and mind," and what do you find? Sometimes you find it's pleasant and sometimes it's painful; sometimes it's quiet, sometimes it's restless, and you begin to relate to what Zorba called, "It's the whole catastrophe," all of it, instead of fearing the painful things and running away all the time, and grasping after pleasant things, hoping that somehow by holding them they'll last and seeing that they don't.

My teacher, Achaan Chah used to wander around the monastery at times and talk to people and just say, "Are you suffering much today?" And if you said, "Yes," he said, "Oh, you must be quite attached," and kind of giggle and go along. There wasn't much more to say. You come to see that you don't own this body because it changes by itself, that you rent this house; you get it for a little while, and you can honor it and feed it and walk it, and jog it if you want, but it's not yours to possess. You can begin to see, in fact, that none of these things are possessible because the nature of life is nonpossession. You're an accountant in the firm -- you get to count it for awhile and that's all.

We sit to awaken, and we awaken by coming into our bodies and our senses, and we start to see the laws which govern life so we can come into a wiser relationship with it. What does this mean for our lives? Well, this really teaches a way of wholeness and awareness, of bringing our body and mind together, our heart and actions, being conscious with our speech, conscious with our eating, conscious with walking, making them each a part of what allows us to grow and live. To do this means accepting the fact of impermanence, and of some pain and suffering, and the fact that we don't control it very much. I mean, you control some of it, but not very much, and in a really limited way. If you can't accept those things, then you will probably want to stay in your fantasy, because they're what you encounter when you come here.

Some people might ask, "Doesn't meditation fragment us away from the world? You say that it makes us more present." It can if we become attached to solitude, if we sit and try to get quiet and block everything out, close our eyes and ears and nose or go into a cave.

There's another story of an elderly woman in New York who goes to a travel agent and says, "Please get me a ticket to Tibet. I want to go see the guru." The travel agent says, "You know, it's a long trip to Tibet. You'd be much happier going to Miami." She says "I insist. I want to go." So this old lady gets a ticket, brings her things with her, gets on the plane and goes to India, gets the visa and the pass, takes the train up to Sikkim, gets a border pass, takes the bus up to the Tibetan plateau, and gets out. And they're all saying, "Where are you going?" "I must go see the guru." They say, "It's such a long way. You're an old lady. It's up in the mountains." She says, "I'm going. I have to see the guru." They say,"You know, you only get three words with him." "It doesn't matter, I am going." So she goes, and she gets on the horse in Tibet, because there are no roads in this part, gets to the foot of this large mountain, and all these pilgrims are saying, "Where are you going?" She says, "I want to see the guru." They say, "Remember, you get just three words." She says, "I know, I know." She gets in line, gets up there, finally past the guards at the door who say, 'Three words.only." She goes in and there's the guru sitting in his robes with a kind of scraggly beard. He looks up at her and she looks at him, and she says, "Sheldon, come home."

I tell it mostly for a laugh but the fact is that for us who live in the Bay Area, the spirituality that's going to work for us is not a spirituality of finding peace by leaving the world. It's not to say you shouldn't go and take a vacation in Yosemite or have periodic retreats. But fundamentally, for spiritual practice to be vital in our lives, it has to be what we can use in the supermarket, while we drive, when we're walking, when we're dealing with our families; to make everything a part of it, and not to escape.

Someone might ask in the same vein, "Doesn't meditation fragment us from the world?" It can if one tries to escape, but what we're training here is an awareness that can be used throughout our day.

What about social responsibility? We're on the brink of nuclear war. There is exploitation and injustice in every country. There are 40 wars going on right now, in Iraq, Iran, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Cambodia, Laos, Libya, Angola, Afghanistan, all these places, and God knows where else. And it's not just a story. It's painful for millions of people, as is starvation, as are 50,000 nuclear warheads which could literally destroy most of the human beings and many or most of the major animals that live on the planet in a painful way, easily, quickly.

One must listen to one's heart in this. It's interesting. You can make a compelling case for different sides. From that point of view you see that what's necessary is not to sit but to act. There is starvation. Nuclear war is imminent if we don't do something. There is compelling need, even in this very rich and affluent society, of people who are suffering in many ways. And what are we doing sitting around? It's quite convincing.

There is another side which is equally convincing, and that is: What is the cause of that starvation and all those wars, and that suffering? What do you think is the source of it? There's enough oil, there's enough food, there's enough resources on this planet. The cause of it is greed, and the cause of it is prejudice and hatred. We hate people of different religions, different skin color, different customs; we like our country, our family, our religion, our type. So there's hoarding, and there's grasping, and greed and hatred and ignorance. We've tried revolutions for many centuries. It's helped in some ways but in others it just keeps going around because we haven't touched the root of the problem. The way out of the root of the problem is for someone to discover what it means to not be caught up by anger, what it means to be free from that fear or that prejudice which arises in human hearts and minds, what it means to be unafraid of that which is painful as well as that which is pleasant -- to have the heart open to all of what the world presents.

We don't need more oil and food as much as we need somebody who understands how to avoid getting caught in anger and fear and prejudice. And that somebody is you. So instead of it being a luxury to meditate, from another point of view, it's a responsibility for anyone who can, to figure out in their own being, in their own life, what it means not to be caught by these forces, to learn some new way -- and then bring that to bear on the economic and social and political kinds of suffering as well in the world.

There's a favorite letter of mine from a Nobel Prize winner named George Wald, who is a biologist

at Harvard. He wrote it in response to an argument about the starting of a Nobel laureate sperm bank. Some irate feminist wrote into the paper saying, "Sperm banks, they should have an egg bank. Why just sperm?" He says:

> You're right, Pauline. It takes an egg as well as a sperm to start a Nobel laureate. Everyone of them has had a mother as well as a father. Say all you want of fathers, their contribution to conception Is really rather small.
>
> Nobel laureates aside, there isn't much technically in the way of starting an egg bank. There are some problems but nothing so hard as involved in the other kinds of breeder reactors.
>
> But think of a man so vain as to insist on getting a superior egg from an egg bank. Then he has to fertilize it. And when it's fertilized, where does he go with it, To his wife? "Here, dear," you can hear him saying, "I just got this superior egg from an egg bank and just fertilized it myself. Will you take care of it?" "I've got eggs of my own to worry about," she replies. "You know what you can do with your superior egg. Go rent a womb, and while you're at it, you better rent a room too."
>
> You see, it just won't work. For the truth is that what one really needs is not Nobel laureates but love. How do you think one gets to be a Nobel laureate? Wanting love, that's how. Wanting it so bad one works all the time and ends up a Nobel laureate. It's a consolation prize.
>
> What matters is love. Forget sperm banks and egg banks. Banks and love are incompatible. If you don't know that, you don't know bankers. So just practice loving. Love a Russian. You'd be surprised how easy it is, and how it will brighten up your morning. Love whales, Iranians, Vietnamese, not just here but everywhere. When you've gotten really good you can even try loving some of our politicians.

This is the other voice. He said this amazing thing, that even the Nobel Prize is a consolation prize because what human beings most want is to be honored, to be loved, to be recognized. And what the world most compellingly needs is someone who understands how not to get caught in these ancient human patterns of prejudice, fear and anger.

Doesn't meditation make people withdraw from the world anyway? One has seen that for sure. There's a fine teaching in the Buddhist tradition called, The Near Enemies. The near enemy of love is attachment. It masquerades like love, it feels like it, but it's separate. It says, "I love you but really I'm attached to you. I need you out there to make me whole." Rather, the sense of love is honoring and seeing our connection.

The near enemy to compassion is pity. "Oh, that poor person, they're suffering. I don't suffer, not me certainly,." but they all do, and it separates them again. The near enemy to equanimity or balance of mind is indifference. It feels like, "Ah, everything is fine basically because I don't give a shit. I don't care about anybody," believing that in not caring we can find some peace. Real

equanimity is when the heart begins to open and we find a capacity to experience all that the world presents -- with balance, with love, with openness.

Our training in meditation is not a running away from the world at all. It's really a sitting down right in the middle of it, paying attention to that which is pleasant and that which is painful, that which makes a lot of noise, that which is silent, and begin to listen to our relationship to it, to observe it, to learn from it, and learn a wise way of relating.

Then what is the heart of this inner way of practice? The heart of it is mindfulness, listening, paying attention to our bodies, to all the various energies, to the voices, paying attention when we eat. Which voice do you listen to when you stop a meal? Is it the belly which maybe speaks first and says, "Oh, I had enough. Comfortable, nice and full." And then the tongue chimes in, "Gee, but that fruit was so good, let's have a little more." And the eyes say, 'Yeah, there's more of that other stuff too that we haven't finished yet." And you hear all these different voices. In our culture we don't listen to our bodies so much. Like James Joyce somewhere in *Ulysses* said something like, "Mr. Duffy lived a short distance from his body." We do in some fashion, you know.

The first foundation of mindfulness -- to become wise -- is to live in the physical reality of our body, to live in the feelings, to be aware of emotions, to be aware of the pleasant and neutral and unpleasant aspect of our experience, and to learn that we don't have to resist that which is painful and grasp that which is pleasant all the time. That's perhaps our conditioning, but in fact it doesn't lead to peace, it doesn't lead to happiness, because things change anyway. Even if you're attached to them they change.

It's an open-hearted and non-judging awareness which comes into the body and into the feelings and then observes the mind as well as its laws, the law of karma, the laws of impermanence, and begins to see how to relate to it all out of compassion, kindness and wisdom, which means seeing how it's really operating. Sometimes it gets very painful when you sit. Sometimes it's pleasant; you have bliss and light. Then you get attached. Sometimes it gets painful and then you want to avoid it.

Thomas Merton said at one point:

> True prayer and love are learned in the hour when prayer becomes impossible and the heart is turned to stone.

Sometimes it's in the very greatest difficulties in our sitting or in our life that our heart opens the most, or we finally get the fact that we can't get attached to things and hold on to them; that they don't go the way we think but the way that they go. So wisdom begins to arise.

How then to work with the basic difficulties which arise in meditation? What to do when there's physical pain? As best you can, sit and quietly mentally note "pain, pain," paying attention. See if you can notice how it changes. Sit comfortably. Don't make pain for yourself. There's plenty in this life without it. But if you'll notice, sometimes it comes anyway. Then see if you can learn some balance with it. When you observe pain, one of three things will happen. Do you know what will happen if you observe it? Sometimes it will go away; sometimes it will stay the same; and

sometimes it will get worse. That's not your business.

Your job in meditation is to start to see things as they are; light and dark, and up and down, pleasant things and painful things; to open to them, to start to pay attention to all of what makes up our reality. That develops what is called in spiritual discipline, a heart of greatness. If you open the door to the outside, what do you get when you open it? You get whatever is out there. You get the weather for that day. And if you keep the door open, you get the changes in the weather. If you open your mind and your body and your heart, what do you get? You get everything. You get what's painful and what's pleasant. And there is a way to come to a new relationship with it.

In working with difficulties -- desire, anger, restlessness, doubt, fear which are the traditional hindrances which arise in meditation -- how can one work with them, how can one make one's spiritual practice so that these become workable?

There's a story in the community of George Gurdjieff of this obnoxious and very difficult man who finally left, for he was having such a hard time. Gurdjieff paid him to come back. Everyone was upset because they all had to pay a lot to live there, and here is Gurdjieff paying this old creepy guy who gets annoyed at everybody and is dirty. They asked him why he did that, and he said, "This man is like yeast for bread. Without him, you wouldn't really learn the meaning of patience or compassion or loving kindness. You wouldn't learn that about yourself."

So when these states of mind arise -- restlessness, desire, fear, wanting, worry, agitation, or judgment, if only it were somehow different than it is, "I don't like this" -- what to do with them? Sit in the very middle of them and study them. Note how they feel in the body. There's desire. Desire runs much of our world. If you watch TV that's all they sell is desire. Pay attention to see what it's like, how do you feel it in the body, what is it like in the mind. Give clear and careful mindful attention to it, without getting caught -- not suppressing it, or trying to get it go away, and not getting involved. Just noting, "desire, desire, wanting," until you come to see its nature and you come to some balance where you're not so caught up in it or afraid of it.

The same for anger. Most of us are either afraid of it and stuff it down or we act it out. See if when judgment or anger arises you can just sit and note, "angry, furious, judging," whatever it is, and feel it. Heat, movement, energy in the body, certain contractions, different qualities of mind, see if it is possible to experience that energy and learn from it. See how it changes, what it does to you, what its flavor is, its effect on you, and then maybe you can learn not to be quite so caught in it. It doesn't mean it won't still come, heaven knows, but your relationship to it can be a wiser one. Do it again and again -- with fear, with all the kinds of mental states that come up, especially the difficult ones -- until you can sit and allow them to come and go like cows or sheep in the meadow.

What if they're very strong, what if they're too difficult, they're really, really hard, what should you do? You're so restless you just can't stand it, what to do? Die! Be the first yogi to ever die of restlessness. Just say, "Fine, take me." Surrender to it and let it kill you. And what you discover if you do that is that in a way you die; what dies is your resistance to it, and that you just carry on. You discover this powerful capacity we have, if you work with it, to open to all of our experience and find some balance in it.

If you're more advanced, if you've done practice for awhile, you may also wish to work with the capacity one has to go into the very middle of something. If there's desire, anger, or fear, or whatever it is, not just to feel it, but see if you can find the very center of it and discover what's there, and maybe go through the center in some way. I'll just leave that as a *koan* for you right now.

Now, what about all the different kinds of meditation? Here one is learning Vipassana. How about Tibetan meditation, Zen or TM, and so forth? There are a lot of good ways to practice. There are these two students of a master who were arguing. One says, "It's really good to sit very still and not move and just work with whatever pain comes," and the other one says, "No, no, that's macho. You want to relax and be gentle, and just be aware, but you don't make a lot of effort in it." And they're arguing and they can't seem to get any answer. And they go to the master. One says, "You've really got to make effort to bring your mind back and to stay very present and not to move, and in that way you get through all this stuff. You learn how to be still in the middle of anything." And the master says, "You're right." And the other one says, "But wait a second. Don't you want to learn to be loving and gentle, to move if you really need to, and just to find a balance with it all, to be soft and not to struggle against it, but simply to open." The master says, "You're right." And a third student who was sitting there says, "But they can't both be right." And the master says, "And you're right too."

There are many good ways of meditation. There are some that are better than others, in the sense that some have a limited purpose, but there are many major schools of meditation which are wonderful if they develop awareness or mindfulness of the body, or the mind and the heart are sense-experienced, where you observe how the world is working. They can bring you to liberation, they can bring you to freedom. So it doesn't really matter which kind you've chosen. If you're doing Vipassana practice, wonderful! If what's accessible or interesting to you is Zen, fine! What's important is that you pick one and you stay with it and do it. Its takes discipline. If you want to learn to play the piano, it takes more than just a day once in awhile, a few minutes here and there. If you're lucky, after a year you'll be able to play "Happy Birthday To You." If you really want to learn something in a full way -- tennis, piano, not to speak of training the mind and opening the heart -- it takes perseverance, patience and a systematic training. Pick a practice, use it, work with it every day, work with a teacher if you can, or in circumstances where you sit with other people. And in doing it over and over again, it starts to develop your capacity to open; it starts to train you to be more in the present moment; it starts to develop this sense of patience. When you sit and really feel what's in there, it brings a kind of compassion.

Now, what's the particular value of intensive retreats? What's the value of leaving the world to go off on a weekend or a ten-day retreat, or even a day here?. Why not just do it at home? There are two things to say. First again is a story of Mullah Nasrudin. He's out in his garden one day sprinkling bread crumbs around, and a friend comes by and says, "Mullah, why are you sprinkling those bread crumbs?" He says, " Oh, I do it to keep the tigers away." And the friend says, "But there aren't any tigers within thousands of miles of here." And Nasrudin says, "Effective, isn't it?"

One tends to get rote or go on automatic pilot in whatever one does. Have you noticed that? You learn how to do it, you master it a little bit, and then you check out. Part of the process of

meditation is to wake up from being on automatic pilot or Zombieland. It's kind of ironic because you come here and you walk around very slowly, you don't look at anybody, and you look more like a zombie. But inside it's a different story. What we're doing is breaking our habit. If you walk at your normal pace, la, la, la, and whistle while you walk down the street, what would happen most likely is that your mind would immediately go off some place else.

We use the form of intensive retreats, of a day or a weekend, to use the silence, to use a bit of stillness, to slow down, all as ways to break the habit of automatic pilot, to begin to awaken in a new situation. Then you can take that back to your daily life. We use it also because there is a great strength that comes in meditating in groups. Especially in the beginning it's hard to do, and you're sitting here and squirming, and everybody looks like they've been meditating for hundreds of years except you, and you'd be embarrassed to get up, so you stay with it, which is not a bad thing.

There's another reason for taking more than twenty minutes or half an hour or an hour a day for meditation, and that is, when you do it in a number of hours of succession, there's a greater possibility that you will really get concentrated, and that you'll get quiet and silent inside. And in doing so, it becomes possible to see more deeply, to kind of dissolve the thought and go to the nature of the experience more directly and immediately, and see, in fact, how rapidly it changes, and how we grasp things outside ourselves or our self-image, or even that the basic sense of oneself is made out of thought and attachment, and that fundamentally we don't exist as some separate entity, that that's all created out of our rapid thought and attachment. We come to some radical new way of seeing -- that we are not, in fact, separate.

Einstein put it his way:

> A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "universe," a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of our consciousness. This delusion is really a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires, and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of understanding and compassion, to embrace all living creatures in the whole of nature and its beauty.

As we get silent and our awareness gets refined and deeper, when we pay careful attention to it, the sense of separation and solidity breaks down. So this is one of the strengths of doing deep or silent or retreat practice in meditation.

What to do if you actually attain something in meditation? People ask that sometimes. "You should be so lucky," is the first answer. But there is a second one, and the most important one. I remember when I went to my teacher Achaan Chaa after many ventures in meditating in other monasteries and different kinds of practice and experiences and recounted them all to him, feeling kind of pleased with what I learned and how I'd opened, and he just looked at me and said, "Well, do you still have any greed?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Still got fear and anger?" I said, "Yeah." "Still got delusion?" I said, "Ah, ha." He said, "Fine, continue." That was all he said, just "continue."

So what you see is that meditation is not to attain some state of mind -- they don't stay, you can't get them to stay -- but to come to each moment with awareness, with a greater sense of openness of heart, and with a clear seeing.

What can we learn of most value in all of this? When people die, they commonly tend to ask of themselves only a few questions, maybe just one or two. One might be, "Did I learn to live well -- freely, honestly, authentically?" And maybe even more fundamentally than that, "Did I love well?" All the other things that one does have a certain measure of importance, but when it really comes down to it, it is, "Have I loved well?" When somebody says, "Okay, death comes to your left shoulder and taps you and says, 'This is your last dance and it's all over," what is your reflection to be? What do you care about? What meditation can open for us in our sitting, and even in the difficulties, is this possibility of learning to be freer in the ups and downs and changes of life and its pleasures and pains, and learning somehow to open and love, to be unafraid to express that love and to feel it in a full way.

One of the most beautiful images for meditation which I've seen was a poster of Swami Satchidananda wearing a little orange loin cloth, his long flowing beard, a very handsome kind of Indian guru figure, who is also a fine teacher. He teaches yoga and meditation. It showed him in the yoga posture standing on one leg, very graceful, only he was balanced on a surfboard on a big wave. It was very impressive. And underneath it said, "You can't stop the waves but you can learn to surf. Meditate with Swami Satchidananda," or something like that. It captures the spirit of meditation practice and the teachings, and how to manifest it or bring it into a world that is full of senses, of sights and sounds and change.

The reason we go through all this trouble and do this strange looking thing, is to somehow live more fully, to see the people that we live with, to see the trees, to be present when we go for a walk in the park and not be thinking about the bills that need to be paid, and what happened yesterday; to live more fully here, to be able to love in a greater way by opening in ourselves all the corners of our minds to that which is difficult and that which is easy. Perhaps because it's our deepest desire to discover our true nature, to come to some sense of our oneness with life or to understand who we are or what all this strange thing that we got born into is about. Basically it's the only game in town, if you look at it; everything else is kind of transitory. It is simply to pay attention and discover what the whole process of life and death are about.

In order to do it, one needs to cultivate or practice mindfulness or awareness, to have it built on or foster some sense of inner stillness so that we can see and listen to all these things. It requires courage. It's not such an easy thing.

> Only as a warrior -- says Don Juan -- a spiritual warrior, can one withstand the path of knowledge. A spiritual warrior cannot complain or regret anything. His life is an endless challenge and challenges cannot possibly be good or bad. The basic difference between an ordinary person and a warrior is that a warrior takes everything as a challenge while an ordinary person takes everything as a blessing or a curse.

It's a spirit of taking what comes to us and really working with it. Sometimes you take it as a

challenge, and sometimes you do take it as a blessing or a curse, or you worry about it or complain. You can complain mindfully then, if that's what you want to do. You can learn from that as well as anything else. Let it be simple. The spirit of it is really one of opening, of discovery, of seeing; to sit, to walk, and to train yourself to bring the attention back, concentration, mindful balance, to observe the breath, the body, the feelings, the mind, and all of the movement of what we got ourselves into, and see how one can relate to it at times in ways that cause pain, how one can learn to relate to it with wisdom, with loving-kindness, with a greater sense of understanding and compassion.

It's really not all that complicated. Sometimes it's difficult to do, but it's not all that complicated. Someone once asked Aldous Huxley as he was dying if he could say what he had learned in all of his experience with many spiritual teachers and gurus and much of his own spiritual life, and he said, "It's embarrassing to tell you this, but it seems to come down mostly to just learning to be kinder." To be kind, though, means that you have to be here, you have to be present for what's actually in your experience.

Householder Series:
The Eightfold Noble Path
-- Right Attitude

So one has decided that spiritual practice is worthwhile for some reason. That doesn't mean that we have to go off in a monastery, but our household life, our driving, our interpersonal relations, they are our practice, and they require some working with. The next level or the next step in this is Right Attitude or Right Thought. One sees the value in inner life and sees that frankly our happiness is based on our heart considerably more than it is on external circumstances. When there are difficulties around, if the heart is open or clear or understanding, we can be happy. We can be in the midst of beautiful circumstances and be miserable, be lonely or depressed, and know that our happiness which we seek is really a function of our heart, our interior life.

The Dhammapada begins with:

> Mind is the forerunner of all things." If you act based on kindness and wisdom in the mind, happiness will follow you like the wheel of a chariot follows the ox which draws it. And if you act based on unkindness or you act from an unwise state of mind, then unhappiness follows just as the wheel of the cart follows the ox which draws it.

There are three aspects to Right Attitude. The first is openness or receptivity. In undertaking our practice, try not to make it a certain way: "I want it to always be peaceful, I want it to be calm, I want not to be angry" or "I want my body not to hurt" or "my knees" or "I don't want to be restless" or "I don't want to be afraid" or "I want to come to a lot of light or joy." Good luck! You get that sometimes. But if you just look for that, what will happen in your daily practice? A really simple thing happens if you're looking for that. What happens? You're disappointed. And then what do you do? You stop sitting. If you hold in mind how your personality should be or how your body should behave or how your mind should be, does it listen to you very much? Tell the truth! You sit here and say, "Thoughts, don't come." Does it help much? A little bit with some training, but just a little. It's like the radio. The advertisements come, and you can't say, "I want radio without advertisements." It doesn't work.

You might have begun some investigation or awareness of what your personality is like. Most people when they start to look at their personality, after a little while say "yuk" because personalities have that kind of quality to them. You say "God, maybe if I practice hard, my thoughts will quiet down and I can kind of change my personality." I have news for you! Your personality is kind of like your body; you come in and you get issued one for this ride. And you can get wiser or kinder, but you kind of have it, and you'll be a wise character of the same personality that you are as an unwise one, but you'll be pretty much the same. Or you'll be a loving person, whatever you are

now, however you define yourself.

Openness means not getting caught on, "I want it to be quiet or peaceful, the body or the mind to be this way," but more a quality of discovery, of experimenting, of seeing what you are. "I'm going to sit and listen to my heart and see what I really care about or where I'm afraid or what I hold back on. I'm going to look at my mind and see what the patterns are, what the desires are, and see what makes me happy and what makes unhappiness, and how that works in the world."

There are enormously rich and deep things to discover in our practice. It requires this attitude of, "I'm going to look and learn," rather than, "I'm going to make it a certain way."

There's a beautiful poem I'll read from the German poet Rilke. He says:

> Sometimes a man stands up during supper
> and walks outdoors and keeps on walking
> because of a church that stands somewhere
> in the East. And his children say blessings
> on him as if he were dead.
> And another man who remains inside his
> own house, stays there inside the dishes
> and in the glasses, so that his children
> have to go far out into the world
> toward that same church which he forgot.

Such a wonderful poem. There's something in us, in our nature, which compels us to discover. I remember a very powerful moment with the old guru who I studied with, Nisargadatta Maharaj, who taught the way of Nisarga Yoga. "Nisarga" means natural. The basic translation of his name was "Mr. Natural". He was this 80-year old cigarette-smoking man. He had a little cigarette stand. He was kind of a combination like Krishnamurti and Fritz Perls. He would put you on the hot seat when you came in and ask you about your spiritual life.

One day we were in a room about this big. People were coming in and asking questions. Somebody came in and asked a question and was a little bit dissatisfied and left. And another person raised their hand and said, "Maharaj, what will happen to that person who came and asked that question and left? Is it all over for them in this life? They didn't stay here. You are a great guru, and they weren't interested, and they went home." And he twinkled at that moment, he really lit up, and he said, "It's too late. Even the fact that they put their foot in this room, even if they hadn't asked the question, means that somewhere in there there's a seed of really knowing who we are and what this life is about. Not what you were taught in elementary school or what's on TV or the newspapers, but a deep seed of knowing our true nature, that wants to discover; it's like coming home. The fact that he just walked in the room means that that seed has started to sprout. And no matter if he tries to forget it and goes back and gets lost, sooner or later that will manifest in awakening."

We can't not do it once we start. Trungpa Rinpoche in speaking with his students at a big public talk one night said, "Frankly, I recommend that you don't start the spiritual path because it's painful and

it's difficult; it's really hard. So my recommendation to all of you is not to do it. You can leave now." Then he said, "But I have a second recommendation, and that is: If you start, you better finish. If you begin, then really do it."

It's something in us. I think it's the part that loves truth, or maybe it's the part that loves connection with another being. Even if we're terrified of intimacy - some of you may know that one - or we're terrified of getting close and then losing things, or we're afraid of dying, or it's hard to look at parts of ourself, there's something in our heart that really wants union, that wants to connect with people, with life, with the world around us in a deep way.

And openness then, the first part of Right Attitude, is this process of discovery, of seeing what's here and opening to it, not trying to change it but seeing clearly with mindfulness, without judging our fear, loneliness, aggression, joy, happiness, love, sorrow; our body, how we use it, how we exercise with it; what we eat, when we're full, when we overeat. The beginning is just this quality of discovery, because it's fantastic then. That makes spiritual practice alive; it's not some rote imitation. Then we can begin to learn, and we learn about the forces of desire, of fear, of wanting, of love, that makes the whole world go round, and really runs our lives. Whether we're conscious or we're on automatic pilot, they still operate. We start to discover who we are and how it works.

This leads to the second part of Right Attitude, which is renunciation. There is a saying in India, "When a pickpocket meets a saint, he only sees the saint's pockets." What we want determines what we see.

If you walk down the street and you're hungry, what do you see? Restaurants. "There's a Greek restaurant. I could have feta cheese or a nice salad. Oh, there's a nice natural food restaurant. No, I think I'll have a burger. That's a good place for burgers." You don't see shoe stores. Or if you come to the sitting and you look around, there's break time, time for tea, you see what you're interested in. If you like to talk to women, you'll see the women. If you're interested in sex, you see people who are attractive to you or your competition for those people. If you're interested in astrology you kind of check out and see whether there are lots of water signs or fire signs that come sit. If you're interested in young people or old people, that's what you scope out. If you're a barber, you come in here and see who needs a haircut.

What you're interested in determines and limits what you see. What renunciation means is putting what we want aside for a little bit. At Achaan Chah's, where I studied in the forest monastery for awhile, we did a lot of work with a practice of the monks' rules as discipline, and there are hundreds of them. At first they seemed like a real pain in the ass. As I learned to work with them, work with the discipline of not eating after noon, or sitting in a certain kind of posture when you were with senior monks -- there's a whole lot of ritual around it -- it required a lot of surrender. And as I did it I said, "I want to do it my way. This is 2,000 years old and it's dumb, and it's modern times," and all kinds of resistance came up. Of course, I didn't have much choice. I was a monk and I was supposed to do it. I mean, if I had stopped, I suppose I could have left or something. "Alright, I'll do this trip." But I had all the resistance, and all the things of not wanting to follow rules or not wanting to go against my habit. We're spoiled in this country. You can drink whatever kind of beer you want, eat whatever kind of food, travel where you like, and we have a capacity to change our

lives in ways that most people in the world don't come close to.

So here it was, renunciation. What came from it was a discovery that there's a strength of heart that comes when we don't just follow our habit; and it brings a sense of well-being or purity or something, because we begin to train ourselves. We don't have to follow all of our habits and all of our desires.

Achaan Chah was great because he would psych you out when you came there to begin practice, and if you were someone who loved to meditate and loved it peaceful and quiet, he would assign you to the monastery in the middle of Bangkok, in the traffic. And if you loved to socialize and talk and be with people, he would send you off to where everyone was in separate caves, and you had to deal with your loneliness or your aloneness. The style of practice which really is relevant to our lives, is to look into that which we're afraid of, which we run away from, or which keeps us moving all the time.

It requires a little fire. Practice has fire. If it doesn't have fire, it's not interesting. Yeah, you sit and you hold hands at dinner and you do a little "Om" and it's kind of peaceful, and you eat. It's not very interesting. If there's fire, it transforms your body, it transforms your heart, it makes you feel your loneliness and your desire, and you look at places where you hold tension in your body, and what it means to be unhappy or to be happy, to look at your suffering, to look at your expectations -- that's juicy, that's interesting, and that's where liberation comes.

The second step is renunciation. It means beginning to work with areas of our life where we've been unconscious and which we can identify.. I mean, I could go around the room and just ask you, and you could all name off the things that could use a little work, not that they're bad or anything, but because you can empower yourself through it.

Let's take a moment now and think of an area to work on this next week, maybe a very small one. It might be a simple a thing such as biting your nails. Think of one thing for yourself that you really want to look at and discover more about, that you're caught in -- it's a habit, it's a compulsion, or a fear, or whatever. Do you have one? I'm sure you must be able to think of one. Okay, fine. Here I want to give an assignment which you're welcome to do. If you're the kind that resists assignments, please don't do it. The assignment of working with openness is to just look at it for one week. Make the resolve in your mind, whether it's nail biting, or being afraid of this, or compulsive about that, whatever it happens to be that you choose, that for one week you're going to be a botanist, and you're going to study it, when it comes out, is it a night creature or a day creature, what it's mating habits are, and what it eats, and how long it's there. So you're really going to study it. First you'll see the superficial nature of how often it comes. Count it for a day, whatever it is. It might be a mental state or an activity. See how often it comes. Then start to look deeper. See what's there when it comes. When you bite your nails, when you pay attention to your heart and your mind, you see, "Oh, I start biting them when I'm afraid. Alright now, what happens? I'm afraid. What's there with the fear? Oh, I get lonely. Maybe that's what it is." So you see it's loneliness, and then fear, and then chomping away, or whatever it is that you're examining.

So let yourself take a week and go from the activity itself, really seeing how often it comes, and

what it's like, and also look at the heart and the mind under it, and see if you can discover the mental states that come, and see how they come and go. Let it be a practice of a deeper insight than that. You see the content, you see the sources of it in your feelings, and then you also see how the action and the mind states come like clouds for a little bit and then they pass away.

That's your assignment, to study it for one week. Then the second week's assignment, which I'll give you tonight in case you don't come next week, is to stop it for just one week, whatever that particular thing is, either the outer activity or the inner one if it's there. Try to stop it and watch what happens when you stop it, not that it's bad or you're going to get rid of it completely, but then make your observation and your experiment to see what mental states and what experiences come when you don't do that. Does this give you some sense of what I mean by "fire" or being willing to work with yourself? It's discovery; it's not that bad. You may do it for the rest of your life, but you can begin to sense this capacity of inner strength, of directing your attention, concentrating your mind, and seeing with more clarity. We start with little things and we see how we're bound. It's really the question of bondage and liberation, from biting your nails to the deepest inner things. We can start to see what it is that creates bondage, and that to discover this resource we have to be freer inside.

We become, as Ram Dass put it, connoisseurs of our neurosis. It's not that the neurosis goes away necessarily, but you have, "Wow, look at that example. Isn't that fantastic! I really did it that time." And there's a sense of humor that you can bring to it. When you observe, after awhile either there comes despair or humor, depending on which you want to pick. After awhile you get tired of despair, and you see, "My God, there it goes again."

The first thing in Right Attitude is openness; that it's not a thing of "I'm going to perfect myself and make a perfect personality and a perfect body and a perfect mind." I don't know anybody like that. But it's a quality of really discovering and opening. And the second is a willingness to work, not to just follow our habits, but to put ourselves into it a little bit, to put some effort out, renunciation. And the third is the quality of non-harming, or loving thoughts, and how to evoke that, how can we bring this quality of loving thoughts, how can we evoke that quality in our spiritual life, which means becoming more conscious of what we do in what we do.

One way is to see the events that come to us as gifts, especially the difficult ones; not necessarily as good gifts, but gifts. Don Juan calls them "challenges."

One way to really discover this quality of love is to see that we've got a big playpen. I'm getting into baby metaphors these days. You have to understand it's my new conditioning. We have a big playpen and a lot of toys, some of which are hot and they burn, some of which are cold, some are pleasant, and some aren't. Our life is limited; we're born, we're going to die. Nothing will stop that. No matter how fast we run, or how much we jog, we're going to die anyway. Because it's limited, it makes it interesting to experiment with. Let's learn in this time that we're here; let's really look at it.

It's hard, because it's easy to love kittens and puppies, babies when they're not crying, and pleasant experiences. That actually doesn't have much to do with love. That's kind of an ease of mind or sentimentality or something. I think, really, love manifests when things get difficult. That's when

you really know it. That's when the fire melts whatever barriers we have in our heart. Our hearts want to be melted. The pain isn't so bad. It's much better to have that all happen than have it all still, solid and barricaded.

What love requires in practice, this quality, is "constancy" -- Suzuki-roshi's word.

St. Francis de Sales says:

> A cup of knowledge, a barrel of love and an ocean of patience.

In a way this quality of love and patience are so related. Our practice will go through cycles. Sometimes you sit at home and it will really nourish you, and you'll feel rested afterwards; other times you'll sit down after a busy day and the body will be tight and the mind will be spinning, and you'll be hating this person, and worried about that, and you don't want to feel it, and you don't want to look at it. Feel it, look at it; work to nourish that quality of constancy, of what's called, "a long-enduring mind." It's not a short game. You know, we're used to instant food, drive-through, tell the lady through the speaker, "Yes, I'd like a Big Mac, fries and a coke," or whatever it is. You drive around and you get it and you can eat it while you're driving; you don't even have to stop. Instant gratification. This is not an instant gratification thing. It is the longest thing you'll ever do because it's your whole life. It's really to discover how to transform your life from being on automatic pilot to being conscious, to discovery, to play. And it's wonderful. So it means that you don't complete it, you actually learn how to play the game and make your life into that.

It has many cycles. There will be many times when it's hard to sit, maybe more than when it's easy. And even in the good moments they'll come. You know what happens when something is really sweet and good, a wonderful taste, a great sexual experience, a good concert, a piece of music, or some wonderful sitting? What happens? There's this little voice that comes in the middle. What does it say? "It won't last. Can I get it to stay? How much longer?" There's that worry even in the middle. We can't kind of enjoy it because there's that thing inside that tries to grasp it.

Wisdom is also this development of patience or love or constancy, that you go through so many cycles.

I'll read you a poem from Gary Snyder called "The Avocado".

> The Dharma is like an avocado.
> Some parts of it so ripe
> you can't believe it it's so good,
> and other parts hard and green
> without much flavor,
> pleasing those who like their eggs
> well cooked.
> And the skin is thin,
> the great big skin around the middle
> is your own original true nature,

pure and smooth.
Almost nobody splits it open
or ever tries to see if it will grow.
Hard and slippery it looks like you should plant it,
But then it shoots through the fingers and gets away.

We grasp it sometimes, or we touch it, we touch something really deep, and it's beautiful and it's tremendously important. Then what happens? Bleep. Slippery seed. That's fine. You pick up the avocado seed again, or you plant it, or maybe make a garden of avocado seeds, avocado trees.

As I speak I'm trying to translate the talks and concepts that I've used so often in intensive retreats to try and find ways to really make them applicable in our situation of jobs and families and driving, and all the rest of it. I did a radio show today on KCBS which will be on in a couple of weeks. And at the end of it I taught a driving meditation, knowing that people listen to the radio when driving. "Don't close you eyes. Hold the steering wheel. Now relax. That's right." It was great fun. But that's the quality of beginning to make what we do our practice, through this openness or discovery rather than some ideal that's spiritual; through some willingness to renounce or a little fire, and finally through a tremendous amount of patience or constancy.

Here's another exercise I want to give you. Pick one day next week, and maybe next time we'll have a little pairing at the end and see who did it and just share with one another in a pair what you discovered. Pick one day next week and see how many moments of impatience you can count. Even if you get to 500, don't judge them, don't try and make them go away, but in one day of your life see how many times you can count impatience, 50, 200, 500. We'll have a contest. The person who comes with the most moments of impatience they saw in a day will get a prize.

Patience can even be used to understand impatience, because if you look at it, you start to see what's there when you feel impatience. We discover love by looking in places where it's not. Actually, we discover deeper or truer love. Don't look at what's romantic. Forget that part. Look at where it's hard, and you can really learn about love.

Do the exercise. I'll give you a little bit of a hint. You get impatient when the kind of experience is happening that's unpleasant, when it's painful, when there's some experience of body or mind that hurts a little bit. For the heart to open you have to be willing to feel pain, joy, pleasure, hot, cold, the whole thing. When you open the door, what do you get coming in? You get what's there. And if you open the heart, you get the experience of what our humanity is, what's rich. You can't open the heart for pleasure and not feel the pain. The world is dual; it's up/down, light/dark, hot/cold, and when we open, we discover a kind of capacity for joy and for understanding which allows for the fact that life has pleasure and pain. It's got them both. If you don't want pain, go to another planet, because this one has light and dark, sweet and sour, hot and cold, and pleasure and pain. That's the game.

If you want your heart to open, study your impatience. It's a fantastic place to look. Count it through a day, and just see what the things are that evoke it as you look. Don't try and change it. There are wonderful things you can learn from it.

This is from the Sufis again:

> Overcome any bitterness that may have come
> because you were not up to the magnitude
> of the pain that was entrusted to you.
>
> Like the mother of the world
> who carries the pain of the world
> in her heart, each one of us is
> part of her heart and therefore
> each is endowed with a certain measure
> of cosmic pain.
>
> You are sharing in the totality
> of that pain and are called upon
> to meet it in joy instead of
> self-pity.

It's not a judgment but rather realizing we have this capacity, we have a beautiful capacity to suffer, and we have a beautiful capacity to love, and we have a beautiful capacity to open to the richness of our experience which has all that in it -- what's joyful, what's unpleasant -- so that the attitude of practice is like a flower blossoming. You started, so it's happening anyway, but you can help it. You can give it a little plant food or you can water it. By sitting every day you water it, and the plant food and the nourishment comes from the sangha, from coming together, from listening to the Dharma and discussing it, and getting those extra kinds of nutriments that help you when you work in your daily life.

If we do that, then we can find the dharma that's true. We can work with it in traffic on Highway l0l, in our kitchen, with our children, in our office, and in the times of our inner solitude, and then things really do become rich and wonderful.

I hope I wasn't too preachy tonight. I speak in a way to remind myself of these things that just make it a lot better to live. It's not that you should do it, but these are just laws of what makes life richer or happier in some way.

I want to close by telling one more story. The story, which to me is a wonderful illustration of openness, is of a physician, Larry Brilliant, who was involved in a campaign to put an end to smallpox in the world. He was working in the villages in Nepal and India. Almost everyone had been inoculated. There were a few small areas where it still existed. They had to go in because if they didn't, then it would spread, and the whole thing would start all over again around the world. There's blindness that comes from smallpox and in some cases terrible disfiguration and brain damage. So it was really a very important thing.

They went to this village and the villagers refused to be inoculated. They said that smallpox came from God, and God brought both disease and life, and that that had to be honored as it came. Here's

this guy, Larry Brilliant, who's a very devoted spiritual person, and here are these people saying it's from God, and he has to make some choice. He and the people with him say, "God or not, we don't want another l00,000 children in the world next year to be blinded by smallpox." So they went into the village at night with their jeeps. They first went to the house of the chief, and the doors were barricaded. They broke the doors down, and they went in with nurses and doctors, and they wrestled the chief and his wife to the floor -- she was apparently tougher than the chief -- and they gave them their shots. They were screaming and saying, "No, no," and whatever, and for him it was terribly traumatic because his values had been that you respect the religion of all people, and so forth. Working in spiritual practice, it's not so black and white, it's not so easy. I'm sure you have seen that, haven't you? Making choices.

Then what happened after that? Already that was difficult. So they're sitting there, and after inoculating the chief and his wife and the family, then the village was easy to inoculate. The chief goes out to his garden -- very small garden, it's a really poor village -- and picks a couple of squash, some of the few vegetables that are in the garden, and brings them in and hands them to the doctors, and says, "I would like to give these as a gift," and then starts to prepare a meal with the very little they have, and they're astonished. They say through the translator, "Why is he doing this?" And the chief explains. He said, "You came to my house. It is my religious belief that smallpox is a gift from God, among the many things in this world, and following my religious belief in my heart, I had to resist you. It is your belief that it is the best thing in the world that everyone be inoculated. Following your belief, and given the fact that there were more of you than there were of us, you inoculated us. Defeat is no shame! Now you are a guest in my house and I would like to treat you as such."

As he tells the story it was one of the most wonderful awakenings in his life. It was the kind of awakening to see that you are in a difficult situation. To live is difficult, and we're always in these binds Can you stay open, can you discover what's new? Can you allow the people around you to do surprising things? Can you yourself do surprising things?

Householder Series:
The Eightfold Noble Path
-- Right Speech

The next steps in the Eightfold Path, have to do with what's called Uprightness of Heart, how to live in an upright way, not crooked, or bent, or wobbly, or something like that.

Don Juan teaches and talks very often in his writings, in his speaking with Carlos Casteneda, about choosing "a path with heart," -- about picking a way of practice and a way of life, and that one question needs to be addressed: Is this a path with heart? Is this one that I can follow and live according to, and live in harmony with the deepest longings of my heart?

Each path with heart, whatever we've chosen as our path, has a particular foundation or support. Support for what? What do we really want in our spiritual practice or in the path that we may have chosen? What do you want, what do you want for the world around you? Think about it. What do we want for the world around us, and then what do we want for ourselves? Often the answer is the same, a bit more peaceful, more loving, a little wiser, or taking it all less seriously. I don't mean no anger or no fear -- that gets a little too idealistic -- but perhaps in our world and in ourselves, not to be so caught in it, not to get caught into where it leads, as it does in the world, to so much violence, sorrow and hatred.

Do you have a sense of what you want, just a little bit, for the world or for yourself? How do we get this? The foundation or support for a path with heart, or a world with heart, rests on the foundation of a basic harmony of our being. For if your life is out of harmony, there won't be peace, or there won't be compassion, or there won't be wisdom. What does it mean, this basic harmony? Well, if it's missing, if it's not there, it's difficult to see clearly and we suffer because of the pain of our conflict with the natural laws around us.

One of the laws of every path with heart is the law of non-harming. Harmony means an absence of excessive greed, hatred and delusion. It's a very specific definition. Excessive greed, hatred and delusion means so much greed, or so much hatred, or so much ignorance, that we act through them in ways that harm other beings or that harm ourselves. It's really the same, because if you hurt someone or something, what happens? Generally, you feel bad and you suffer. They feel bad. Often they get you back later, or they say, "Your karma gets you back in some fashion; it happens back to you." It's not that this is sinful or bad or anything -- it's one of the principles of how this game operates.

Harmony has a positive meaning as well. It means a nurturing of that karma of joy, or serenity in truth, or integrity, so that our speech and our actions -- our being in the world -- manifests from the heart. It's called *sila* in Sanskrit, uprightness of heart.

There's a beautiful *Jataka* Tale about a beautiful and wonderful young man in ancient times, who went to a far-off university in India, away from his family, and he was telling his professor why his

family life had been so happy, and why his own life had been so happy. The professor told him that his only child, his son had died. The young boy said, "That doesn't happen in our family, children don't die, people don't die young." The professor was just aghast. "How could that be? It happens all over to everyone." The boy said, "Well, there's something special in our family, and for the last many dozen generations that we've recorded, no one has died young." So the professor became very intrigued, especially since he was grieving over the loss of his own child, and he took a pack, put on his traveling clothes, and left the university to go back to the town where this boy lived, to visit his parents, and discover why people in that family did not die young.

There's a beautiful poem that comes from this particular *Jataka* Tale. He went in to meet the father and he told the father, "I've come with terrible news. Your boy who is in my care at the university was struck by illness and has died." The father laughed. Very unusual, amazing, how could this be! And the professor said, "Why are you laughing?" The father's eyes were really bright and he smiled and he said, "Because the people in our family don't die young." He said, "It must be some other boy. It can't be my son." The professor took out some bones from this bag and said, "See these, this is your son." They were really some sheep bones that he brought along. The father laughed, "Oh, they're sheep bones; they're not the bones of my boy." He says, "How can you be so sure? How do you know?" The man laughed a really heartful deep laugh, very joyful. He said, "Because we've recorded generation after generation in our family that children don't die young. The professor said, "Why is this so?" Then the man began his poem.

> Because every morning when we rise,
> we rise with care,
> and we take time in the morning to contact each
> person in the family and see that they are well,
> and speak with them
> And every day when we rise we look after the
> animals that are part of our family and we see to it
> that they are fed and cared for and that they're
> not in distress.
> And every day when we begin our
> conversations with people,
> we take care with our words, and we speak
> only that which is sweet, and that which is true,
> and that which is helpful.
>
> And because of this, people in our family
> do not die young.
> And every day when we go to work,
> in our fields, or in business, or in commerce, we
> act in ways which are kind to the other people,
> which are honest, and have integrity,
> and because of this the people in our
> family do not die young.

And every day we look around
us in the community
and we see if there is someone or
some being in need,
and we give what we are able to
share and help them. Because of this,
for many generations
the people in our family do not die young.

He goes on and on with this poem. And it's so sweet, it's like nectar to listen to. It's nectar because it's true. It's not necessarily speaking about chronological age and death, but again it's talking about the heart and what it means for the heart to be awakened or open and to live in that way. That's what it means to be alive.

When your heart is closed it's like you've already died in some way. When I listen to the story or read it, I just feel such delight in thinking what power it has for us to begin to live our life in a harmonious way. This is called *sila*.

The first two steps of the Eightfold Path are Right Understanding and Right Attitude. Last week we talked about openness, of discovery, of playing with our life rather than being in a rut, of being willing to investigate and look at the laws of our life and the world around us.

Now *sila*. *Sila* on one side means restraint, non-harming. On the other side, its positive dimension is loving, caring. My teacher Achaan Chaa used to love to talk about *sila*. He would just light up, and he would go on for hours, and he would be so happy talking about a virtuous heart. We hear so little about it in our culture, in our time, and yet it's so important. It's the foundation of any path with heart. And it's beautiful. It's like the heart gets cleansed by our true words, by our virtuous action. It makes our life upright and strong.

Right Speech is the next step of the Eightfold Path and it's the first of the three steps that speak to this uprightness of heart or virtue, *sila.* Speech has enormous power.

There's a story of a Sufi master, a healer. He goes into this household one day where there's a sick child, and there are people gathered around. He goes over and he passes his hand over the child and he says some sacred words, a kind of prayer, and he says, "Now you will be healed." The parents are very grateful, but a really disbelieving and somewhat aggressive man says, "How can you heal a child just by saying some words, all this healing and this spiritual junk"? The master turns to him and looks him in the eye and says, "What do you know of this? You are an absolute fool. You know nothing!" He says this in front of all the other people. The guy becomes enraged and he turns red and he is shaking with anger. And the master says, "Wait a minute, sir. If a word of mine has the power to make you turn red and shake with anger, why should not a word also have the power to heal?"

We speak a lot in our life. We talk so much to each other. Words have tremendous power. They have the power to put us to sleep. Do you know that one? "La, la, la, yes, yes, no, no," back and forth for

hours. Or they have the power to wake us up. Words of wisdom, words from the heart, words from the eye of wisdom can make all kinds of things clear to us, can help us to see, to let go, to discover, to awaken.

There are two principles to Right Speech, to this foundation of speech as the first aspect of uprightness of heart. The first is that our words be true. Truth is so sweet. If you know anyone who really speaks honestly and truthfully, admittedly sometimes they're a pain in the ass, but mostly one's sense of that person is a delight, that here's somebody I can go and speak to or listen to and hear that which is true. It's just wonderful.

There's a story of Mullah Nasrudin, the old wise man and fool, this kind of strange character. He puts up his booth. It's sort of like Lucy in "Peanuts." It says, "Psychiatric Assistance" or "Psychological Counseling -- two questions," or something like that, only instead of five cents it's five old dinars. It's really a lot of money. People think, "Gosh, he must be very, very good to charge so much money." So one person goes up to him, and takes out five old dinars and puts it on the counter. He says to Nasrudin, "Isn't that an awful lot to charge for just two questions?" Nasrudin looks back and says, "Yes, it is; and what's your second question?"

Two principles: First, that the words are true for Right Speech; and second, that they're kind or helpful, because it's possible to say what's true and not have it be helpful at all, what one might call "brutal honesty". "I'll tell you just what I think, whether it's helpful or not." The second principle is that speech be helpful, not only that it be true, but also that it speak in some way that's compassionate or kind or useful to someone.

What does communication do in our world? It makes society. Our society is built on communication. We're isolated individuals, in some measure anyway, even if perhaps cosmically we're one, but mostly we experience ourselves as separate. Our society, our friendships, our love, the laws, the whole world around us, is created by agreement through communication. It's very, very powerful. And when it's truthful, or it's honest, or its genuine, it builds trust, and it builds a society of harmony with our friends, with our loved ones, with our family. When its truthful, it opens a channel for our hearts to meet. When it's not, there's no chance for the hearts to meet, or very, very little. You probably know this in your relationships, don't you, that if you have stored things that you haven't communicated, stored resentments, what happens? Or if you have things that you've said that really haven't been true, that haven't come from your heart, that have been covered over, or were manipulative, or made to sound one way when they weren't -- what happens to that communion, that sharing, the space of love? It gets weakened or it disappears, for a little while anyway. It's not available to you. In many ways, the love between people that we live with or spend a lot of time with rides on the vehicle of our communication. If the communication is clear, or open, or truthful, where it's not held, where it's not stored, where there's forgiveness, then there's a real sense or communion.

Classically, wrong speech -- or what's not considered Right Speech -- is False Speech,or gossip. Most of you who have been to retreats have heard Joseph Goldstein tell the story of when he vowed not to gossip anymore for a period of time. He picked a month. And for him he meant in this particular vow not to speak about a person who wasn't there, even if it was a favorable thing, just

not to talk behind someone's back. He discovered this amazing thing, that 90% of his speech was eliminated. We spend so much time talking about third people, most of which is pretty useless.

So it's not false speech, not gossiping, which is very helpful, not back -- biting or undermining people, refraining from harsh or abusive language -- these are the classical things, but they really speak to speech as a vehicle for love, as a vehicle for communion, as a vehicle for awakening. What Right Speech does, it acts as a question: Can we start to become conscious all of these hours where we talk on automatic pilot? Can we make our speech become more useful to ourselves and to our planet? To that question, I ask: What do you care about, what do you want for the world and for yourself?

When we speak falsely, when we back -- bite, when we gossip, and all those other kinds of things, what makes us do that? Have you ever done that? Have you ever engaged in some kind of unskillful speech? Alright, so you know that. Now, look for a second -- for the process of awakening is in investigation. What makes us do that? Entertainment, justification, self-importance, anger, bonding. Yes, sometimes we do. We'll talk about somebody else and put them down because it makes us a little closer to this other person, or we do it for entertainment because we're bored. And God spare us in this culture if we ever had nothing to do and weren't entertained. It's horrible, you know! You come into someone's house and if they can't be with you, "Here, I'll turn on the TV. Would you like some music? Here's something to eat. You can read." Anything but just waiting and being bored. Terrifying thing!

There are all these reasons that we do it. Let's start to study it in our lives. Look at the moments. Don't judge it. We're just looking at the principles of what makes happiness. Happiness or harmony comes from understanding the principles of things. So this week let's also study speech a little bit -- start to look and see if you can find moments where you feel your speech isn't so skillful. Just look at what's cooking inside and what's going on when you do it.

I would like to change the name of Right Speech to "Speech from the Heart." What keeps us from speaking the truth, and with the value in what we know? What keeps us from speaking from the heart all the time? What does it? The society does, you know. I mean, it's not a very good example when you turn on the TV and most of what's there is false, or politics. It is l984 after all, double -- speak. That's one thing. We're in the soup where nobody can speak straight, nobody tells the truth. It's a very hard thing, advertising. It's not just our society. Don't think it's just ours. Sure, in our society we hide death and paint up the corpses and lock away old people and mental patients so we don't have to look at them. We are a society which really suppresses a lot. We just want to look at young, attractive people. It's not quite the youth culture it was since the baby boomers are getting a little older now. We settle for what Time Magazine called, "active and attractive." Before it was, "Young and glamorous," and now it's just "active and attractive."

We still have a mass of youth in our culture, so there are all these things that we don't deal with. It's really the same in other cultures. I remember dealing with some Chinese merchants in Asia. Business is business, it has very little to do with virtue, generally. I went in this store and this Chinese merchant had these statues and I was interested in one. I said, "That's a beautiful Cambodian statue." He said, "It's ancient, fantastic, it's an antique." I said, "Are you sure?" He said,

"Oh, yes, yes; really, really old." He told me the whole story, where he got it. I said, "How much?" He said, "Oh, $8,500." Wow, really fantastic. I looked at it, and I said, "I know this statue, this was made over in Ban Cheng Dow. I know where they make them, and it's a copy, and it's not an antique at all. It looks like an antique. But they make it in that village, I know that's so." And he looked at me and he said, "So how much will you give me for it?" Not a moment's hesitation. It was $20 instead of $8,500. It's not to put down Chinese merchants particularly because we all have that in us in some way. We all have that part.

What is it that keeps us from speaking the truth? The society that hides things around us, the American or the Chinese society? Why else don't we speak the truth? We won't be loved. Look what happened to Jesus. You have to be real careful. That's an extreme admittedly. We feel that. We're really afraid. If we're not loved, then what will happen? Then we'll be pretty much ostracized and abandoned. What happens when you're abandoned? You die, you know. So we better be careful and say the right things.

Why else don't we speak the truth? Fear of rocking the boat. Fear of rocking the boat outwardly -- people will get upset, also a fear of being exposed inwardly. If we really speak the truth at times we'll show our own judgment and fear and violence, and all those things in ourselves that we may not want to let out so much. It would be wonderful to let them out with a little less judgment, because the fact that we all hide them and keep them in is what makes wars. We don't know how to express ourselves, we don't know how to share, we don't know how to see things and let them go and not be caught. It gets bottled up in us individually and as a culture, and then we go to war. War is the expression of the fact that we don't know how to deal with the violence in ourselves. So if we don't like nuclear war, it's tremendously compelling and important to learn about the shadow, about the dark side of ourselves, of our being.

William Blake said:

> If one is to do good,
> it must be done in the minute particulars.
> General good is the plea of the hypocrite,
> the scoundrel and the flatterer.

If we want to do good, it has to be in our words to the people that we live with, and the people that we meet on the street, and the people that we interact with in the stores, and the people that we work with. If you want to stop nuclear war, pay attention to your speech, pay attention how and when your words are connected to your heart and when your words aren't connected to your heart, and what's going on when they're not. Without judging it, just study it, begin to look at it. Look and see what you haven't said. Stop for a second just now. Think about your unfinished business, because life, as you know, goes quickly and sometimes it ends quickly. Who haven't you said something to that you really need to, words of the heart? Just think about it for a minute. Think about it and see if you can see what stops you from doing it. A lot of times what stops us is we think we're immortal and that we'll get to it; that we'll live forever.

As Don Juan said:

> The problem with you, Carlos, is that you think you have time.

To undertake a path with heart is to begin to realize how precious time is, and that we have very little.

So let's turn it around and instead of asking why we're afraid to speak -- we can study that in ourselves -- let's ask: What do we value, again, going back to that question. Our life is short. What do you really value? What do you want? Courage, freedom, love, wholeness, integrity, happiness, pleasure; what is it that you love, that you value?

When Gandhi was teaching about non-harming, non-harming of speech and action, *ahimsa*, the avoidance of harm to any living creature, in word or deed -- someone asked, "Well, couldn't one kill a cobra to protect a child or oneself?" And his reply was, "I could not kill a cobra without violating two of my vows: fearlessness and non-harming. I would rather try inwardly to calm the snake by vibrations of love. I could not possibly lower my standards to suit my circumstances. But I must confess, I could not carry on this conversation so serenely were I faced with a cobra in this room."

When we're reminded, most of us value integrity. It really lights up the heart to think about living in a way that comes from inside, where our actions, our words, and our inner being are connected. It's very precious. In the Buddhist tradition they're given as training precepts, training precepts which we practice. It's not some God -- given law that we must follow, but precepts which we begin to practice -- to begin to learn to live our life from our hearts, to live our life, as I said, with an uprightness of heart.

Don Juan said:

> Only when the inner dialogue stops can the hidden parts of ourselves be seen and revealed.

We keep this endless speech going on inside, as well. We'll get to the internal dialogue in another few nights. Really, it's the external dialogue. We go "la, la, la" and someone else goes "la, la, la" and we're on automatic, and we're making friends or passing the time, or whatever, and not waking up enough -- not so much to others but to ourselves. Why do we do that? Why do we talk so much? When the inner and the outer dialogue is going on, it hides our loneliness, it keeps us from being bored, doesn't it? It keeps us from feeling afraid. It fills up all that space that's empty, that's scary. It also blocks our heart from opening in some way and from the width of growing. We grow when things get quieter and we can look.

Think about it for a second. When we meet someone, they say all the things that are happening to them, and we say all the things that are happening to us. You know, mostly what's going on, we're just saying, "Hi, I'm here! Are you in there?" That's about all, it's just making a little contact. We have all this elaborate ritual to do it. Or maybe if we're a little quieter we might be saying, "I love you," but that's a pretty scary thing to say, so we say a little here, and she says a little there, or whatever, and it keeps us amused, its true, but it's a safe way of touching another person.

So I just suggest to you that we can learn in our practice to let our words come a little more directly from our heart. It's a wonderful thing to learn and it takes some practice.

So the exercise for this week has two parts. One is to look to see if there are occasional moments of unskillful speech, and just see what's cooking in there, what's going on that motivates it. See if you understand it, without trying to change it. Just look! Are you trying to make friends, or are lonely or angry, or whatever it is, or you don't want to rock the boat Look and see if you'd be afraid of what would happen if you did.

And its opposite side; see if you can pay attention when you speak the rest of the time, the best you're able, and listen to your heart. See if you can begin practicing letting your words come from your heart. A good clue for this is if you're in a conversation that lasts more than five minutes, so you've been talking for awhile, pause, or wake up for a second in the middle of it, and ask inside, "Now, what does my heart really want to say?" You're having this conversation. "What's in there that really wants to be said? Maybe I won't see this person ever again. What do I really want to say?" That can begin to empower your speech, to transform it from automatic pilot to the place where you start to wake up. It's fantastic. It's really wonderful to work with.

I want to close by reading part of the "Four Quartets" by T.S. Eliot, this wonderful, wonderful poet. In this section, at the end he's talking about speech and about his life as a poet.

> What we call the beginning is often the end,
> and to make an end is a beginning,
> To make a beginning.
> the end is where we start from
> and every phrase and sentence that is right,
> where every word is at home,
> taking its place to support the others,
> the word neither dissident nor ostentatious.
> An easy commerce of the old and the new,
> the common word exact with vulgarity,
> the formal word precise but not pedantic,
> the complete consort dancing together.
>
> When every phrase and every sentence
> is an end and a beginning,
> every poem an epitaph,
> and any action is a step to the block,
> to the fire, down the sea's throat,
> or to an illegible stone,
> that's where we start.
> We die with the dying.
> See them depart and we go with them,
> and we are born with the dead.
> See, they're returned and bring us with them.

Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning, every poem an epitaph. Any action, a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat.

If we could do just Right Speech we would change our lives, we would change the world, and we would become enlightened. Just in that. "Enlighten" means awaken to what we do and what's true, because to speak truly means that one has to touch one's heart, one has to listen to it, one has to be there. Then all the rest of what one calls The Path with Heart follows from that.

Householder Series:
The Eightfold Noble Path
-- Right Livelihood

Finally, the third of the steps of virtue is Right Livelihood. What's interesting is that virtue is so infrequently spoken of in our culture, in our modern California culture anyway, because it's Victorian and old and repressive; it needn't be any of those things.

Virtue is on one level a training. It's learning to speak, to act, in our sexual life, in our business life, in our family life -- to train to act more consciously, more mindfully, more compassionately. And it takes practice. It is also, quite wonderfully, an expression of our awakening, a foundation of our awakening. You can't awaken if you're involved in killing, lying or stealing. Even in the more subtle levels of it, it's hard to pay attention. Your mind is caught up, busy, and paranoid. So it's a foundation for a clear mind, and the training of it is a foundation for being more mindful. But even more beautifully, it's the expression of an awakened heart and an awakened mind.

What is Right Livelihood? I will say some things about it without defining it completely. I'll say a lot of things. They're traditional teachings and some contemporary associations, and then maybe we can take a little time for discussion, especially if I get through them in relatively reasonable time.

I remember going to a conference recently with the Reverend Cecil Williams. I don't know if any of you have watched him on TV but he's great. He's a black minister of the Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, who has done all kinds of very wonderful projects in the community and in the state for years. He got up and he spoke. It didn't come from his head. He spoke the way many black ministers are able to do, partly through the culture that allows it or embodies it, but his voice came from a place really deep, and he said to people, "What you need to learn is you need to learn about love." He put it out in such a powerful way. He said, "What I'm talking about is not what love you get, but how much love you give." He said it over and over in his speech in that kind of repetitive way of a preacher, and it was so beautiful. He kept saying it in different ways. "It's not how much love you get; it's how much you give."

I could just end the talk right now. It's really quite beautiful.

What is Right Livelihood? Right Livelihood, like the rest of these aspects of the Eightfold Path, is a path to become happier in our lives and to become enlightened or awakened. There are five aspects.

The first is non-harming. The traditional non-harming means not to take a livelihood that involves weapons, or exploitation, or drugs, or things that hurt people. Not much more to say about it. You can look at it in your life and look at in the society you're around. If you don't do it, great; and if you

see other people doing it, and there's a way that you can help it not to happen, do it. It's pretty simple. That's non-harming.

The second part of Right Livelihood is an appropriate happiness. There is a sutra from the Buddha that talked about appropriate happiness in Right Livelihood; First is the "having." It's essential to have a trade or a career. Even if you change it five times in your life, that doesn't matter. But to feel decent about yourself, it's really important or helpful -- I don't care how much money you have or what you have to do or don't have to do -- to have some way of contributing to society, because you're not happy if you don't contribute. So to find a trade or a livelihood or a career; maybe you use it for a while and then you change it. There's a happiness or a joy in having a career or having work that you can do. And if you haven't found it, it's really a crucial part of spiritual practice to look for it. It doesn't mean it's going to be some big special thing.

There's a mythology in our country that is false. It tells you that you can have whatever job you want; anyone who grows up here can be president -- God spare you -- and that you will find just the right job and it will make you happy, the perfect job for you, the one where your creativity and all your talents are used, and so forth. That is the same American myth like the one of the perfect relationship. I don't know how many of you are still looking for that. Is there anyone who hasn't gotten that one yet? Okay, you got that one. It's true about jobs too; there is not the perfect job. I had the perfect job, traveling around the world to glamorous places, getting a lot of care and respect, relating to people on issues of Dharma and meditation, sitting together. It really was wonderful. I got tired sometimes. People came and they called me in the middle of the night. There were things I didn't like about it. Plus which I couldn't have a house and I didn't settle down until recently. So I gave it up to teach in a different way because it wasn't as perfect as I thought it would be. It seemed perfect. It was wonderful.

There is no perfect relationship and there is no perfect job. Find one, or something, and really give yourself to it; that's a happiness. Secondly, there's a happiness in producing from the job, which is basically to make money. It's both producing goods or services for other people, which we'll get to, but it's also in having things and using them. And as householders, money is necessary, and it's fine, and that's part of our dharma, of our way of being in the world. And to have a career or to find some way to work, even if it's your career for a year or several years, and then to use it to create a home or to create the financial things that are appropriate for you, is great; it's really wonderful.

Also, in terms of being happy, there is a wide range to "using". It can be using in a very simple way or it can be using in a more extravagant way. You're not so happy if it's based on a lot of indulgence. Not that you shouldn't do it, you're welcome to try it, but the people I know who have tried it for awhile found it not so satisfying. So there's a a happiness in having a career and work, and in producing and using the things that come from it, including one's money.

The third happiness is to be free from debt. That's a good one for our country, isn't it? Funny, it was said 2,500 years ago. It seems to still be true because you worry and you're anxious, and you struggle, and it really has to do with contentment. See if you can learn fundamentally or basically to live within your means.

I'm just going to put this stuff out about Right Livelihood. You can do what you want with it. It's not commandments or anything like that; it's suggestions. It says, "Wake up to these different areas of your life; that you're happier if you live within your means, and that people who don't, find themselves unhappy.

Frankly, if you've ever lived in a Third World country or some simple situation for awhile, you discover you don't need one-quarter of what you think you do to be happy. You can live with a lot less than you think you can. And you can be as happy watching a sunset or taking a walk as having an extravagant night out on the town because you know how to relate to those things.

The third happiness is freedom from debt, "having and using," and the fourth is being free from blame or fault in your livelihood, from your work; that you do it not to please the world around you or because of what people will think, but you let it somehow come from inside; that what you choose, and where your actions come from, are not from how they look, because after a while you get caught by that, and you get into pain and sorrow, but that you start to reference inwardly to what matters and what you care about, and that affects your livelihood and your work.

The third aspect of Right Livelihood is growth and awareness; that you can use your livelihood to grow in consciousness.

You know, it's so interesting. We get very identified with our jobs in this country. We meet someone and one of the first things we ask is: "Well, what do you do?" That is what we want to know about somebody. "Oh, I'm a psychologist, I'm a meditation teacher, I'm a nurse, I'm a librarian, I'm a waitress." You're all therapists, I know. "I'm a" -- whatever it happens to be -- "businessman." It's so interesting, when you go to India, nobody ever asks you what you do. It's a very different culture. As far as I can tell, in India nobody does anything. You meet someone, and there's this baba kind of person sitting at the tea stand, and he's been there for awhile, and you talk to him. They don't ask you what you do. They might ask you what form of God you worship; is it Krishna or Shiva or Kali or Durga or Buddha, or whoever it happens to be, but it's not a big thing in that culture to know what you do. It's much more about how many children you have or what form of God you worship.

It's a big thing for us, "What do you do?" It's what we choose in this particular drama. We picked to be born in America somehow. "Alright, I'll sign up for one there," and then in the script of living in America, it's what you do that is a big thing. Okay, do something decent, alright? But it's important to remember that it's part of the theater.

With growth and awareness, the first thing is you don't need to be too identified with what you do. We think what we do is who we are. When you die you aren't going to be who you are, you're going to be something else, or when you get sick, or when things change around, or when the earthquake comes, or whatever, what you do isn't going to matter a lot; it's something that you do. You can do it instead in a spirit of adventure or a dance or an exploration.

Don Juan was talking to Carlos Casteneda about the qualities of being a warrior. In this place he is training him to be a hunter in the wilds but also a hunter of knowledge. He said:

> I told you already, to be inaccessible as a hunter does not mean to hide or to be secretive. It doesn't mean that you cannot deal with people either. A hunter uses their world sparingly and with tenderness regardless of whether the world might be things or plants or animals or people or power. A hunter deals intimately with their world and yet they remain inaccessible to that same world.

Carlos as usual says, "I don't understand." There's a contradiction, it makes no sense. How can you be inaccessible if you're there in your world day after day?

> "You did not understand." says Don Juan patiently. "A hunter is inaccessible because they're not squeezing their world out of shape. They tap it lightly, stay for as long as they need to, and then move away leaving hardly a mark."

What a lovely way to think of it. It's to live lightly on the earth, to take what we do, and use it, and care for it, to be tender, to be careful with it, but not to get so identified or so caught up in it.

There are a lot of ways that one can begin to bring awareness to one's work. There are the simple ones of exercises. For example, Gurdjieff used to give awareness training exercises where he'd tell people to do things in a different way than they were used to. Tie your shoes and do the bow around the other direction, or open your car door with your left hand instead of your right hand, and let it be a signal for a little while, maybe for two minutes, that you're going to wake up and you'll go off automatic pilot and be conscious as the door opens and you sit down in the car and you begin to drive. It becomes a meditation.

Bring that kind of thing into your work. Do things a little differently; do them backwards. Use your meditative awareness or mindfulness to start to make the work that you do a meditation. Especially after these hours of training in monasteries, where you just walk back and forth doing walking meditation, and then you sit down, and then you walk some more, I've often thought, "Gee, I could be on an assembly line somewhere and get enlightened because it looks like the same thing, if I did it right." And I worked on an assembly line once at the Beacon Gauge Company, putting these screws into this little part, into a gauger. It was not very different than what I did in the monastery, except that everyone there was resenting being there and waiting for their paycheck, or stoned on Quaaludes, or whatever got them through the day.

Growth and awareness means that we can begin to use our work, whatever it is, to wake up, to awaken. To do that requires some discipline. For many people it requires a lot of discipline and a lot of repetition.

Discipline and repetition in work. Most every kind of work that you do, whether it's as an artist, or as a therapist, or as a mechanic, or whatever kind of business thing that you do, will have repetition and boredom. One way to react is to put yourself on automatic pilot and go to sleep. Sometimes it's useful. I'm not saying that automatic pilot doesn't have its place in our life. But it's possible to begin to use it more as a discipline, to begin to awaken in some fashion, to be willing to take it as your meditation.

I ask you a question, to reflect: What could you do in your work more meditatively? How could you bring more mindfulness into the particular work that you do? You can start to look at that. It might be little ways of how you open the door, it might be in ways where you take a pause between people you see, and promise yourself that you'll just sit there at your desk or at your place for a minute or five between people that you deal with and get centered again on your breath. It might be in regard to this next thing or the next two things of Right Livelihood which I'll come to.

The first was non-harming, the second was appropriate happiness, the third is to begin to use it to wake up. You can do walking meditation, you can work with your breath, you can do meditation as a mechanic, you can do meditation as a doctor or a nurse, by paying attention to your body, to your posture, to your heart, to your mind states, to your moods. You can start to listen. Then maybe you can answer Cecil Williams' question as you go along through the day. It's not how much love you get but how much you give.

The fourth is simplicity. It's a little hard to talk about in Marin County. Maybe it is in our whole culture. I'll do my best, okay?

Ryokan, the old Zen poet, says:

> My hut lies in the middle of a dense forest.
> Every year the green ivy grows longer.
> Not much news of the affairs of men,
> only the occasional song of a woodcutter.
> The sun shines and I mend my robe
> when the moon comes out I read Buddhist poems.
> I have nothing to report, my friend.
> If you want to find the true meaning,
> stop chasing after so many things.

What a nice poem. That which we seek, which we long for most deeply in our hearts, doesn't come from so much complexity or chasing around. It really comes from being in touch with ourselves, with listening, with feeling, with awareness. Simplicity!

There's a beautiful and contemporary movement of Right Livelihood that has been sparked by Gandhi teaching people to spin and live more simply in India, and it's been picked up by people like Schumacher, who wrote the book on *Small is Beautiful and Buddhist Economics*. And there's a lovely foundation called The Friends of Right Livelihood Foundation who offer an alternative Nobel Prize each year in Stockholm the day before the Nobel Prize is offered, not quite as much money. But the people that they've had win it and for what reasons are just beautiful. Some of the winners in the past were Stephen Gaskin from the farm who started his own Peace Corps which now goes to about a half dozen countries in the Caribbean and Africa with medical services and agricultural things; or Mike Cooley, who's a person in charge of the Air Space Workers at Lucas Air Space Factory. He did a brilliant thing. He got a plan together that's very wonderful. He asked all the chief scientists to look at what the military/industrial factories and complexes could make to serve the world rather than destroy it. They couldn't think of anything. Not very much came out of

them. So then he asked all the people who worked for them, all the workers in the factories, and got some groups in different factories around England, and came out with a thousand wonderful suggestions of things that those skills and those factories could make that would be an alternative to building weapons. Or a man named Bill Mallison, who is a founder of Permaculture, which is a whole new much more sensitive agricultural system, particularly in Australia, and it is starting to be spread around the Third World. There's a whole list of people like that who started to make their livelihood and their relationship to work somehow connected with the sense of living lightly on the earth, of living with some care or some tenderness.

It's a very beautiful thing, this quality of simplicity, of seeing that we don't need as much as we thought we did to be happy, and really asking yourself the question: "What do I really, really want?" or "What would I want when I'm old and I look back, what will I have cared about?" or "What do I care about for this world that I live in?" Some sense of our connectedness with it.

And that leads to the last of these aspects of Right Livelihood which is Service, and in some ways the most beautiful of all -- seeing that what we do is totally interconnected with the rest of life, of discovering our connectedness, and seeing that the world is entrusted to us somehow. It's our planet and it's entrusted.

Ram Dass one time asked his teacher, Neem Karoli Baba Maharaji, what his teaching was, and he said that his whole teaching was, "Love people and feed them;" that was all.

It's so nice at intensive meditation retreats that I've taught so often to watch the people who come and volunteer to cook, because they're not cooking in a restaurant in order to get their paycheck and kind of get the stuff out and get home and do something more interesting. The people come there to cook because they want to, because they like to cook, and they want to support people's practice, and their sitting, and their retreat. And there's so much caring. A pan of food goes out and there's flowers on it, or there's some decoration, or there's something that's done to it, or just the way that it's cooked. Sometimes they'll just sing when they cook, as a way to let that very simple act of cooking, which we all do, become an expression of caring, of service. We can do that in our work. There are fifty little ways that one can be mindful in service.

In a very nice book by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh called *The Miracle of Mindfulness* -- it's the best book that I know of on mindfulness in daily life -- he said that his teacher gave him a whole series of little exercises.

For example, when he washed his hands, he would recite this thing, "As I clean my hands, so too may I bring the cleanliness or purity of heart to all the people that I meet today." Or, "As I drive in the traffic, may I wish well on all the other people that I meet, that I pass by." It's a very different relationship. I've sat on buses. You sit in your cocoon. You're reading, or whatever, and everyone else has got their book or their paper, and they're in their little cocoon, and you don't want to be too connected. Then I sat there and I've looked up, and without being too obvious or hokey about it, I just started to do loving-kindness meditation, looking around, since I'm not doing anything but daydreaming anyway, or planning, which is worse, and I start to think, "May I be happy and peaceful," or whatever, and then I look around in an unobvious way, "May all these people be

happy." I let myself be tuned into them. Some of them are bent over with suffering and sorrow, and some are teenagers who are just kind of booming with energy or with aggression, or whatever it happens to be. Some are happy and some are sad. I just send each one of them a little loving-kindness. It totally changes your relationship to the bus trip completely. You get off that bus and it's like you just took a trip to India to some wonderful ashram. It's true if you do it because you feel connected with the world and the people around you.

That's the spirit of service. It can be in giving what you actually do, because any kind of livelihood, as long as it's not harming, is a fine one. It really is. We need it all. We need farmers, we need plumbers. As I've said in retreats, "I'd much rather live in San Francisco with no doctors than with no plumbers." It's a very crucial thing. And we're all needed together and we all find something to do for awhile. It's beautiful. You can see it as well, "I do it to get through the night or the day, and get my money" or "I'm going to do this thing and awaken and serve, even if I'm a plumber or I'm doing something that may seem at first mundane, I'm going to use it to serve."

You know how nice it is to have somebody who is your waiter or waitress, or at the checkout counter at the supermarket, or the person who comes to fix your refrigerator in your house, be a nice human being who cares when they do their work, both about their work and about you. It's like the Buddha walks in and says, "Hey, I'm going to fix your refrigerator today but really I'm the Buddha. I'm just here in the guise of a refrigerator repair person." They say a few nice things to you and remind you that you can love the world around you a little bit more, and you can awaken, and they fix the refrigerator and go off. What a fantastic thing! We each have that capacity to bring that kind of light to the work we choose.

Zen Master Soen-Sa-Nim -- who now has temples all around the country, ten or fifteen Zen centers -- when he first came to this county he knew no one, and he wanted to teach Zen. After talking at Brown University, he got a job in Providence to support himself. He was a Zen Master in Korea and quite famous and had many disciples, and he wanted to teach in America. He didn't speak English very well. The only job he could get was to work in a laundromat, mopping the floors and fixing the machines when they broke down. So there's this guy with a bald head, in a gray robe, down there cleaning up the laundromat. Students from the university who would come down to the laundromat got curious. "Who is this strange guy down there?" They talked to him. "I Zen teacher." He still doesn't speak such good English. And they said, "Yeah?" He said, "Yeah." After a while people started to come down and hang out in his laundromat. This is a true story. They would really get interested in who this guy was and what he taught. Then they started to come up to his apartment and he taught them how to sit Zen meditation. He would go to the laundromat and leave them sitting there, and so forth. .Gradually it switched around and over the last 12 years he has many Zen centers and many hundreds of students. That was a fine thing to do.

There's a beautiful whole chapter in the *Bhagavad Gita* on Karma Yoga.

> I've already told you, in this world -- says Krishna --
> aspirants may find enlightenment in two different paths.
> For the contemplative, there's the path of knowledge,
> and for the active there's the path of selfless action.

Freedom from activity is never achieved by abstaining from action.
Nobody can become perfect by merely ceasing to act.
In fact, nobody can rest from their activity, even for a moment.
All are helplessly forced to act by the movement of life.

Do Your dharma, your work.

Do your duty always, but without attachment
This is how a person reaches the truth,
by working without anxiety about results.
The ignorant work for the fruit of their actions,
the wise must work also but without desire or attachment,
pointing their feet in the path of the Dharma,
giving their heart to it,
working without attachment.
Let them show by example
how work is true practice.

The whole chapter in the *Bhagavad Gita*, is about beginning to use our work through the path of selfless action. It's not how much you get that makes you happy; it's how much you give.

I want to end with a guided meditation. Don't move, stay where you are. It doesn't require sitting up or anything. Let your eyes close for a second. Actually, it will just be a minute or two. Let yourself picture the place where you work. See it, or sense it, or feel it, or if it's not where you work, then where you go to school, if that's what you do, or if not that, then the place where you live if you don't work right now. For most people it will be the place where you work.

There are two questions we're going to ask: One is: How can I make this work more conscious?" And the other: How can I make it more of a loving service? In the place where you work, the Buddha or the Bodhisattva of Awareness, Manjushri, has left a gift for you. It's a box, and you'll discover it there at your place of work. Let yourself sense it, or see it, or know where it is, and go over to it. When you find this gift from the Buddha of how to make your work more conscious, inside the box will be a clear symbol of something that you can do, a very clear symbol of how to make your work more conscious for yourself.

Let yourself open the box and be aware of what that gift is, this symbol of how to make your work more conscious. Let yourself know it, or see it, or sense it. If it's not clear to you, then there's a light switch over on the wall. Turn it on. Bring a little more light into the box. You'll be able to see it. The Buddha leaves very good gifts for you. Just the right thing. If you need a little explanation of how to do it, in the bottom of the box you'll find a little note left by the Buddha. Pick it up and you'll hear, or see, or know. It will say two or three words, just what you need to learn, what the symbol stands for.

There is a second gift left for you. Stay at your work-place. This gift was left by the Bodhisattva of Compassion. It's left just at the place where you work. There's another wonderful package, and it's

the answer to the questions: How can I make this work more of a loving service? What do I need to do or how can I do it? What must I remember? So let yourself find that gift, whatever way you need to, and open this package left by the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Let yourself see it clearly. If it's not clear, then take it over to the window and let the sunlight stream into it. You'll see it, a clear symbol of how to make your work a service of love.

If you need any more information, look in the bottom of the box, and there will be a note again with two or three words on it that will tell you, explain what it is or how to use it.

Then just stay inside for a moment. I'll ask you a few questions and you can just let the answers come out of your own heart. The questions are: How can I begin to discover or continue to discover peace and harmony where I am at work, just where I am? How can I begin to discover the Dharma or truth within this work, just where I am?

Let yourself finish up and gently let your eyes open and come back when you're ready. You know, you can work and treat each person you meet as somebody else to deal with in your work, or you could treat each person you meet as your brother or your sister, or you could do what Mother Teresa does in her work and treat each person you meet as Jesus, and care for them, and wash their feet, or love them, or do whatever you do in the same way you might love Jesus or the Buddha.

You can work on one day and just get through the day or the night. And you can work on another day and have each person that comes to you, and each person you meet, be a place where your heart really opens, and where you share a love and a caring and a tenderness.

I close with reading this last thing again from Don Juan. It's actually Don Genaro, who is the most playful of them. He says:

> Genaro's love is the world. He was just now embracing this enormous earth, but since he's so little, all he can do is swim on it. But the earth knows that Genaro loves it and it bestows on him its care and that's why Genaro's life is filled to the brim, and his state wherever he'll be will be plentiful.
>
> Only if one loves this earth, this life, with unbending passion can one release one's sadness. Warriors are always joyful because their love is unalterable and their beloved, the earth embraces them and bestows upon them inconceivable gifts.
>
> Only love of this splendrous life can give freedom to a warrior's spirit, and his freedom is joy, efficiency, and abandon in the face of any odds. That's the last lesson. It's always left for the very last moment, for the moment of ultimate solitude.
>
> When a person faces death and aloneness, only then does it make sense.

> Only if one loves this earth and this life with unbending passion can one release one's sadness.

So those are some thoughts or reflections on Right Livelihood.

Householder Series: The Eightfold Noble Path -- Right Effort

The next three steps of the Eightfold Path have to do more with inner work of meditation than outer work of Right Livelihood and Right Speech, and so forth. The next step is called Right Effort. It's very important in understanding spiritual practice.

Ramana Maharshi, the great Indian master, one of the greatest ever, and certainly in the last century or so, said:

> Enlightenment is not your birthright.
> Those who succeed do so only through proper effort.

It was an amazing thing for him to say because he became fully enlightened at seventeen years old when he went to his uncle's house and said, "I wonder what it would be like to die. I think I'll try it." And he laid down on the floor and died, and then came back somehow. It's hard to know whether he physically died, but it seemed like he died, and he came back with a very different perspective on life. Nevertheless, he taught for many, many years, and even he said this.

One day Nasrudin went to the market with a recipe for some kind of liver and kidney pie, or something like that, and he bought the meat. He had the recipe in one hand and he took the stuff for his pie in the other hand. And a huge raven or crow saw him walking home and swooped down from a tree nearby and grabbed the meat out of his hand and flew off with it. And Nasrudin shook his head and said, "It won't do you any good. You don't have the recipe."

It gets kind of reversed for us. Most of us, especially living in California, as we do, are overburdened with spiritual recipes. How many Dharma talks, how many spiritual books, how many retreats, how many good therapy things, how many *sesshins*, and how many whatever have you had? You have the recipe. Like all the people sitting under the bodhi tree with the Dalai Lama, and the pilgrims who had come from miles and miles on foot from the high Himalayas to be with the Dalai Lama in Bodhgaya, he said, "Okay, you're here, and you think you're very fortunate because you have the blessings of being under this bodhi tree where the Buddha was enlightened, with all these famous lamas, and the Dalai Lama himself, and you have the teachings, the sacred meditations, and mantras, and all these things. It won't do you any good. The only thing that makes it work is if you take the trouble to practice it. All the rest of it is very nice, and you might as well watch Dallas or something like that. It's not so different. Maybe you would learn more from Dallas, I don't know. At least it wouldn't be pretentiously spiritual." So the answer is "effort."

Effort is central in our spiritual practice. Traditionally, there are four kinds of effort that are talked about. The effort to deal with unskillful things has two parts. First, the effort to abandon that which is unskillful, and that means abandoning our grasping, our fear, our hatred, or our anger. It doesn't mean judging oneself or resisting it. It means learning skillful means not to be so caught up in things, not to be so attached. Then, the effort to maintain their absence, once you're figured out how to let go of them some. It's like Mark Twain and smoking. You all heard that. When someone asked if he had ever stopped smoking, he said, "Sure, it was easy. I've done it thousands of times." The second effort is the effort to maintain that abandonment in some fashion.

The other two traditional definitions of Right Effort have to do with that which is skillful; the effort to develop or cultivate or nourish that which is skillful within ourselves, and then the effort to maintain or sustain it, so that in some fashion it stays with us.

This is from the *Dhammapada*:

> One person on the battlefield conquers an army
> of a thousand persons,
> Another conquers himself,
> and that is greater.
> Conquer yourself and not others,
> discipline yourself,
> and thereupon learn freedom.

So it's the effort of learning how to cultivate or generate that which is skillful -- which means awareness, loving-kindness, or caring for the world around you, or living more in the present, the effort to abandon the habits, the fears of things that we get caught in that create suffering and that keeps us in the muck, and the effort to sustain them. This is wonderful because it's a teaching that can apply very much to our daily life; it's not just a retreat teaching. It's small habits and all the little pieces. Our life is made up of little activities, little pieces, little habits, and little ways. And we can begin to work with the way we drive our car, the way that we relate to people at work, or the way we eat, what we choose to eat, and how we set about eating -- to make those things more conscious. To make our approach to these bear the fruit of greater awareness, greater attention, of more caring, of more kindness.

Think now for just a moment: what are a few things in your own life that could well be served by bringing a little more of this effort, this effort to pay attention, or the effort to let go and abandon? What little things do you do that you could use in some way to wake up more, to awaken?

Fundamentally, the meaning for Right Effort can be expressed in a simple way: it's the effort to be aware, the effort to see clearly, to pay attention. That's Right Effort. One Zen master was asked, "Would you give me the essence of the teachings?" He wrote down, "attention". Then the person said, "Fine. Now would you give me the whole teachings, the commentary, and how I should undertake it?" He wrote down, "Attention, attention." The person said, "Isn't there anything else?" And he said, 'Attention, attention, attention. That is it, to be present, to see clearly."

Right Effort isn't so much the effort to make the world a different place, as it is the effort to understand the nature of this world, of our body, our mind, this life.

Why is it hard to make the Right Effort, why is it hard to pay attention? It's hard for different reasons. It's hard because we sometimes don't want to see. You know, this idea of "Be Here Now," and so forth, it sounds good,.It's not so good. It isn't, because what happens when you're here now? Has anybody looked? What do you have to be here now with? Pain, boredom, fear, loneliness, pleasure, joy, beautiful sunsets, wonderful tastes, horrible experiences, people being born, people dying, light, dark, up, down, parking your car on the wrong side of the street, getting your car towed; all those things. For if you live here, it means that you have to be open to what Zorba called "The whole catastrophe." Sometimes we don't want that.

Right effort is the effort to see clearly. This world is crazed. There's war, there's prejudice, there's political prisoners, there's all this kind of suffering that we need to remember living in Marin, because it's really kind of a ghetto that we live in, and we forget how incredibly fortunate we are.

I had a letter today from someone I know . She's kind of middle-aged and very poor, and just gets by doing some sewing, and her husband works in a gas station. They live in Florida. They are related to some people I know. They've had a very hard life. She has some kind of progressive degenerative disease. They do not live in such a nice neighborhood, and their house was broken into, and the few things of any value that they had were just stolen. I thought, "God, here I live in such a nice place, and have nice things, and I leave the front door open most of the time, and don't worry about it," and we forget what blessings we have. We forget about the sorrow and the struggle in the world. Part of the effort is to really wake up and to look at ourselves and at the world around us, and to be conscious of it, not to be just asleep.

My teacher Achaan Chah said there are two basic ways of practice. One way of practice is to be comfortable. And it's valuable. You can sit a little and get yourself quiet. You keep the precepts, so you don't harm people, and they start to like you. You say "Om" at dinner. You chant a little before you eat. And everything becomes nicer in your life. It becomes more comfortable and more pleasant because you live a good life and you're peaceful. The other way to approach spiritual practice is not to be involved in trying to be comfortable, but rather to be free or liberated. And that way of practice has nothing whatsoever to do with comfort. Comfort may come and it may not. Sometimes it may be terribly uncomfortable, but its goal or its direction is not comfort; its goal is freedom. It's a wonderful thing, and it's a real legacy of the Buddha.

Right Effort means we really need to start to pay attention, and to see how fortunate we are, and to begin to see the laws that govern the world within which we live.

Another friend of mine just called me this week and said her husband who is in his mid-forties has advanced lung cancer; he just found out about it a few days earlier. Then she called about four days after that. She asked me what was the lesson in that. She said, "You're a teacher. Tell me what the lesson is." I don't know what the lesson is. I said, "I don't know. Call me later, maybe I can think of one." And she called back. If you trust people they generally find out what the lesson is anyway. She said, "I know what the lesson is." I said, "What?" And she said, "The lesson is to love people

while you have them, when they're here." It was so sweet and so touching because it came from a place where she really, really knew it. It's to take care with what we have that's beautiful, and nourish it; and that which isn't, to abandon it.

I'll read you a passage from Nisargadatta Maharaj, the old bidi wallah who I studied with in Bombay; wonderful old teacher. He sold little Indian cigarettes on the street corner, and he was fully enlightened somehow at the same time. He had these classes. He died a couple of years ago. He was a wonderful old man.

Someone asks:

> What can truth or reality gain by all our practice?

He uses truth and love interchangeably. He says:

> Nothing whatsoever, of course. But it is in the nature of truth or love, cosmic consciousness, whatever you want to call it, to express itself, to affirm itself, to overcome difficulties. Once you've understood that the world is love in action, consciousness or love in action, you will look at it quite differently. But first your attitude to suffering must change. Suffering is primarily a call for attention, which itself is a movement of love. More than happiness, love wants growth, the widening and deepening of awareness and consciousness and being. Whatever prevents that becomes a cause of pain, and love does not shirk from pain.

That's an amazing thing to say, that love doesn't shirk from pain, that what loves wants is not pleasure. You live in Marin, you know about pleasure. It's wonderful, but it gets boring after awhile. It does! There is something deeper or higher, that's richer, that is our capacity, or our birthright, or our deepest need. I don't know what it is, but it is different than just pleasure.

What does it mean to make Right Effort? We've touched this, or we want that, or we want to discover or open. There are two different approaches or styles to effort. I've practiced with them both, and I'll put them out, and you can listen and see which works better for you.

One is the Rinzai approach, using Zen terminology, where there is enlightenment, and it's a goal, and you work very hard - you literally bust your ass on your cushion or whatever you do to get to *satori* or *kensho* or enlightenment, and you really make an effort directed to this goal.

One of the ways of practice in the Theravada tradition that I'd done in the Sun Lun Monastery was to sit without moving a minimum of four sittings a day of two hours. The first hour was heavy breathing, where you sat and did as full and deep breathing as you were capable of for an hour. And the *sayadaw* was sort of like a football coach, and he would come around and say, "Harder, more." And you concentrate on it. You get very concentrated in an hour. If you were sleepy it woke you up; if you had thoughts it kind of blasted them out of your head; and by the end of an hour you were very present. Then the next hour you continued to sit without moving, and used that concentration just to be with what your experience was. It was very powerful.

Or the kind of effort in the Mahasi Monastery where I practiced where you sit and walk l5 or l6 hours a day, or l8 if you can. You sleep for four hours and you eat a little bit. You sit motionless, you don't move, and the sittings are shorter, 45 minutes or an hour, and you don't make a a movement without paying attention to it. Lift your hand, blink your eyes, "blinking, turning, moving." You pay attention to every single little thing. Why do that? It sounds so hard. It is, it is very, very hard. And if you start to do it, all the defilements, all the desires, all the fears, all the reasons that you keep yourself spaced out and in fantasy, and don't want to pay attention, they all come at once. Like this wall. And you just sit, and you just walk, and you do it. The purpose is to dissolve the sense of solidity of the world. If you pay attention that carefully, and that fully, or that deeply with concentration -- that's next week's talk on Right Concentration -- you begin to see that what's solid is not solid, and that what seems as "I" or "body and mind together" starts to dissolve into all these little parts. There are the four physical elements, the different mood states, and consciousness, hearing, seeing, smelling, and tasting. And that's all there is! And it takes the whole show apart, but it takes a powerful concentration and a sustained attention to do it. It really is going through fire. There's even a physical transformation.

There's a book I read recently by Ireena Tweedy called "Chasm of Fire". She's this old Sufi lady who worked with this master in India. She talked about her experiences, more in the Kensho metaphor, but it's not so different. It's really sitting through the fire and letting your body, your desires, and your fears, just burn through you, and you just sit. After awhile your attachments to things change and you become much more detached from this that we take to be ourselves, this physical body. And you become more detached from the fears and feelings, and all of those things. You start with that detachment; then you see it as it operates, clearly, because you're not so incredibly identified with "I, me, mine, my body, my mind." It's very powerful!

Suzaki-roshi teaches Zen *sesshin* in a very strict fashion. Or Chan Hsun Hua who runs Gold Mountain Temple. He used to have 49-day chant *sesshins* in San Francisco. You sit for 49 days, and you sleep sitting up, you sleep in your place. I never wanted to do it. I've thought about it. For some people it's terrible because they're already tight and they do it and it just drives them crazy, it makes them tighter; and it doesn't bring any enlightenment at all; it just brings pain. But for some people it's a way of practice, the effort to concentrate, the effort to pay attention, to bring yourself back -- again, and again, and again. It's not the effort of tensing your body, but it's the willingness to sit with anything, and keep bringing your mind back, or to walk with anything, to really do that.

Gurdjieff says:

> If a person gives way to all their desires, or panders to them, there will be no inner struggle in them, no friction, no fire. But if for the sake of attaining liberation, they struggle with their habits that hinder them, they'll create a fire which will gradually transform their inner world into a single whole.

That's one way of undertaking practice. And when you look at how powerful our habits are, and how much we go to sleep, and how much the world really needs somebody to have the courage to say "no" or "stop" or "wake up" or "live differently," it becomes very compelling. I know that you're not on retreat, that we live in busy household lives -- but the same spirit, this kind which is just half

of the effort I'll talk about, can be brought to your daily life. It can be the effort to do whatever it happens to be in your life that you know is really going to make a difference. So one can bring that effort, and it's a wonderful thing to do. And if you learn to do it -- it takes practice - it's really empowering; it brings a certain inner strength with it as well.

The other approach to Right Effort is actually a bridge between these two that would be nice to read about. Someone recently gave me this book called ""Peace Pilgrim." It's about this woman who walked around the country for 20 years wearing her blue jogging suit that said "Peace Pilgrim" on it, carrying a toothbrush. She spoke about peace, that you had to make yourself peaceful and the world peaceful. She never took food unless it was offered to her. She fasted otherwise. And she never took rides until much later in her life. She just walked and talked about peace. And this is her story, and it's a fantastic book.

She said:

> During my earlier spiritual growth period -- The ten years that she was getting prepared to do her peace walk -- I desired to know and do God's will for me. Spiritual growth is not easily attained, you know, but it is well worth the effort. It takes time, just as any growth takes time. One should rejoice at small gains, and not be impatient, as impatience hampers growth.
>
> The path of gradual relinquishment of things hindering spiritual progress is a difficult path, but only when relinquishment is complete do the rewards really come fully. The path of quick relinquishment is an easy path, for it brings immediate blessings, and when God fills your life or the truth fills your life, the gifts overflow and bless all that you touch.

What she said is very beautiful. It takes time, just as any growth takes time, and it's not easily attained but well worth the effort. If you do a lot of it, you get a lot of reward; if you do it slowly, which most of us do, then it's a little more frustrating because a lot of the reward comes when you're much, much freer. It's the way it goes. What can you do? It's still worth it. It talks about both these kinds of effort, that if you're willing to make the effort to really do a lot, or let go of a lot, or transform your life, then tremendous fruits can come. You can change how you live this week, how you relate, or you can take it slower.

The other kind of effort is not goal-oriented, to get to *kensho*, or *satori*, or enlightenment, or dissolve the world, transcend yourself; it's the Soto Zen approach. It's the approach that says that you're already enlightened. And that is enlightenment; it's not something else. It's just what's here. And the only thing that blocks our enlightenment is all these thoughts that say, "This isn't enough; I want it different." If you could just live with things as they are; that's all; this is it.

Krishnamurti speaks about it very beautifully when he said:

> It's the truth which liberates and not your effort to be free.

"All year I'm going to get this, and be that, and now I'll be --" I remember when the first interesting meditation practice experiences started to come, I got very excited, and my mind started to fill with thoughts again. There were these lights and things, and I thought, "Gee, this is really exciting," because I started to think about what I'd do when I was enlightened, who I would go visit and what I would say. It's like that ego, that part of us that wants to take it as a kind of a merit badge or something that you can wear; or a degree. And it's not that at all. It's to live with things as they are, to see them clearly, directly, and truly in each moment.

Ramana Maharshi said:

> There are two paths to awakening. One is that of self-inquiry, where you look to see.

The main koan is, "Who am I?" or " What am I?" And you do it through awareness; or through whatever training that you can, to discover and investigate the body and mind. And the other is the path of surrender, where you say, "Not my will but thine." It's actually the same if you really look at it. "Okay, in this moment I'll be aware of what's here without trying to change it and just see what it is." In that awareness you start to see the truth of it -- that it's impermanent -- that it's not "I, me, mine"; that it's not self; that we're not separate; then it begins to reveal its nature.

This way of effort then is the effort more of surrender, of letting go, rather than trying to attain something. It's surrender to be in each moment in a balanced way.

Don Juan says:

> If one is to succeed in anything, the success must come gently. With a great deal of effort. But with no stress or obsession.

So it's rather the effort to be here again and again and again, and to truly see that things arise and that they pass away; that they're born; that they die; that we don't own anything; that none of it is ours. Our thoughts, do you control your thoughts? Does anybody here have control of their thoughts? We think that they're ours. Or our bodies. We do a little better at that, but not very well, if you look at it.

There's something I want to read. I've been reading all these books on early child development and labor and whatever. It's from a book that I've come to appreciate very much called "Whole Child, Whole Parent." If anyone is looking for a spiritual guide to parenting, it's the best that I've found. It's called "Zen and the Art of Throwing a Ball." It gives a much more Taoist sense, instead of making the effort to come back again and again and dissolve the world. This is the way of effort which finds the Tao within our movement, the way that we live.

The self -- the self-centered sense of us -- knows that freedom has something to do with law and order but thinks that order must be brought about by will power. The child shows us that, on the contrary, freedom comes through subservience to existing order, to the Dharma, through conscious alignment with it. The self knows that freedom has something to do with pleasure, but it thinks it means feeling good and being above the law is what pleasure is.

The child shows us that this pleasure is really spontaneity and that it too is a by-product of absolute compliance or obedience to the law or the dharma.

Here's a story:

> Once I heard a father marvel, "How did he learn to throw that ball so far? I didn't teach him. When did he learn to do this? I didn't even see him do it? Why did he do it? No one in our family is particularly interested in baseball, and yet he did."
>
> Everything that father thought might have been a hindrance. had it actually been present. The family's interest in baseball or someone watching him, or anything.
>
> Somewhere along the way, in the throwing of a ball, the child had conceived of a possibility of freedom. Perhaps it first came through watching someone else, perhaps once in flinging a ball, he had let it fly and surprised himself. At any rate, some freedom had been encountered and was now a possibility in his consciousness.
>
> After that, as long as he remained unself-conscious -- which means undivided -- he was able to give his undivided attention to the possibility of which he had conceived. Through his pure desire for freedom in the sense of possibility, certain laws were given the opportunity to gain power over the child. Aiming himself toward a conscious possibility he became subservient to it. And then through the child's receptive and devoted consciousness the underlying force of being, itself, organized and energized and utilized and coordinated everything in the child to express himself in the form of freedom to throw the ball so beautifully.
>
> He must have practiced for hours on end, expending tremendous effort but little strain because his interest in seeing what was possible carried him along, confident that what he could conceive of was possible and could be realized if he went at it. Sometimes the ball fell short but he did not infer that he lacked power. Sometimes the ball went wild, but he did not infer that the thing was impossible or that there was no predictability and all was chaotic.
>
> Whatever seemed too hard only showed him that he had not yet discovered the knack. Whatever appeared chaotic only suggested that the order and his oneness with it had not yet been discerned. Sometimes his shoulder hurt, but the very hurt became a guide, directing him into better alignment with the hidden force he did not doubt. He looked at everything for what is and what isn't, and everything taught him, until he could throw the ball far, fast, accurately and with remarkable ease.
>
> And he wasn't proud. He wasn't too pleased, and he didn't feel triumphant. He felt grateful. And he didn't feel powerful, he felt surer. And he felt free and was freer.
>
> It was never that he had his way with the ball, rather through his undistracted, absolutely focused, unselfconscious attention, the invisible laws of physics had their

> way with him. through the total submission of himself to the invisible laws, he found both dominion and spontaneity which he rightfully experienced as true freedom and joy.

What a wonderful way to learn. It speaks to this other meaning of effort, and it also speaks to a kind of secret about the first kind of effort, which I've used a lot in practice, and gained from in some ways. And that is, in the end you have to let go. No matter how much effort you make and where it takes you, it doesn't take you all the way, because it's not your effort that makes you free but your discovery of what's true about yourself, and life, and its changing nature and the laws of it; that you come into harmony with it, that you become free. It can be big things. It can be a big *satori* and a big awakening. Sometimes you get hit over the head by someone near you getting cancer or a near car accident, or it can be little things, like a child, where you just begin to take your life as a discovery, and you start to see what are the laws that operate that make people happy, make them unhappy, what are the laws that operate that make war and make harmony or peace between people.

I got a letter recently from someone who had been in one of these classes asking about the question of enlightenment. We talk so much about precepts and following them, and Right Speech and Right Action, what about enlightenment, where does it fit, or is this just a system of ethical conduct? Is this Buddhism? The Buddha said it quite explicitly a number of times in one very beautiful *sutra*. He said:

> The reason for my teaching is not for merit or good deeds or good karma, or concentration, or rapture, or bliss, or even insight. None of these is the reason that I teach, but the sure heart's release. This and this alone is the reason for the teaching of a Buddha.

All the other things are secondary to it, secondary to what that child experienced with the ball or what the old bidi wallah talked about of the movement of love. It's not compelled by pleasure, not by precepts, not by success or failure, but by learning to grow, learning to open, learning the laws of the world, learning to connect. There is enlightenment, there is freedom, it's true, it's absolutely true; and you can experience it; you can come to that.

It says in the *Dhammapada* that:

> To live one day and taste very deeply the meaning of impermanence is better than living l00 years and not to touch it.

Why could that be so? Because to taste that, even for a moment, is that you see what's true about life and you start to live out of that truth more fully. You become free, which is what we all want most deeply. . I ask you a few questions. Think about Right Effort for a moment. Where are you making too much effort in your life? What things do you do where it's too tight and too hard? You need to learn balance. Can you think of them? Where do you try too hard or grasp too much? Where do you make too little effort in your life? Where are you lazy or habitual? What aspects of your life could be ennobled or awakened with more effort? Think about them. Which ones? Where is your life too internal? Where do you shy away out of fear from the world of events and

circumstances around you? Where is your life too external, or you don't sit enough, you don't take enough silence? You don't listen inside to your heart, to what you care about, make it inform your life.

To listen in this way inside is to discover the laws like throwing the ball of Right Effort in your life. Where do you miss the mark? Practice a little more. What takes more effort, what takes a little less? What takes more solitude? What takes more giving, and loving, and serving?

You actually know the answers to those things. They come pretty easily to us. We just forget to ask, or we don't want to ask because it means, "Ugh, I have to rearrange my life yet again in some fashion or other." But it doesn't really matter, because that's the game. Everything gets rearranged anyway. Either you can rearrange it or you can wait for it to be rearranged. It's also the game; to grow. So you can stall it for awhile. If you really drag your feet, you can; but it's not as interesting.

I'll close with my question to my teacher Achaan Chaa.

> I still have very many thoughts, my mind wanders a lot, even though I'm trying to be mindful.

He said:

> Don't worry about this, try to keep your mind in the present. Whatever there is that arises in the mind or the heart, just watch it, let go of it. Don't even wish to be rid of thought, then the mind will reach a natural state, no discriminating between good and bad, hot and cold, fast and slow, no "me" and no "you", no self at all, just what there is.
>
> When you walk, no need to do anything special, simply walk and see what there is. No need to go to a cave or cling to isolation. Wherever you are, know yourself by being natural and watching. If doubts arise, watch them come and go. It's very simple. Hold on to nothing.
>
> It's as though you're walking down a road, periodically you run into obstacles. When you meet difficulties, see them and overcome them by letting go. Don't think about the obstacles you've passed already, don't worry about the ones you haven't seen yet. Stay in the present. Don't worry about the length of the road or a destination either.
>
> Everything is changing. Whatever you pass, do not cling to it, and eventually the mind will reach its natural balance where practice becomes automatic and effort becomes effortless. All things will come and go of themselves.
>
> Sitting hours on end is not necessary. Some people think that the longer you sit the wiser you must be. I've seen chickens sit on their nests for days on end.
>
> Wisdom comes from being mindful in all postures. Your practice should begin as you awaken in the morning and continue until you fall asleep. What is important is only that you keep aware, whether you're working or sitting or going to the bathroom.

Each person has their own natural pace. Some of you will die at age fifty, some at age sixty-five, and some at age ninety. Don't think or worry about this. Try to be mindful and let things take their natural course. Then your mind will become quieter and quieter in any surroundings, like a still forest pool. All kinds of wonderful, rare animals will come and drink at the pool. You will see clearly the nature of all things in the world. Many wonderful strange things come and go, but you will be still. This is the happiness of the Buddha.

Householder Series:
The Eightfold Noble Path
-- Right Concentration

Tonight I will talk about Right Concentration or Right Tranquility. Actually what I want to focus on tonight about Right Concentration is the breath, our life breath. In every moment that we are alive we must hold our breath in consciousness, and mostly we forget we breathe it.

We live in this very fine and beautiful sea of gas, air, oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide, and a few other lesser inert gases, and six or eight or ten or twelve times a minute we breathe this gas into our lungs, and it goes all the way down into the little sacs or alveoli, or whatever they're called, into the lungs that fill up and exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide and cleanse our system. And somehow we are so connected with this ocean of air on the earth that we're like fish in water, we don't notice it, we don't see it, and mostly we forget we breathe it. Yet it's essential and it's so important in our physical life -- and in some way to connect with it, to touch it, is a way to open our spiritual life very practically, very straightforwardly.

I have friends whose baby was born out in the country with no doctor, and it was born breached, and it was blue and wasn't breathing. They gave this little tiny infant artificial respiration, and they sat with with it and waited to see if it would breathe, whether it would be alive, whether their son would be a part of their family. They said that's where they learned what it was like to watch the breath. It wasn't even their own breath. It was like to really pay attention, to see if there will be a breath. The baby's grandmother who had done a lot of retreats, died of lung cancer a few years ago. She had developed lung cancer earlier, and had a remission and did her last dance rather wonderfully and admirably. Then when the cancer came back and she finally died, in her whole last week when her lungs were filled with fluid, she talked about waiting to see if the next breath would come, whether she would be able to breathe the next breath. She was so grateful for the meditation she had done. She said otherwise it would have driven her crazy, but here it was, it was something she could really use, and she did that for her whole last week of life. She died in a very beautiful way.

Our breath is kind of a mirror for us. Most of the time we don't look in that mirror. It's the mirror of our energy, it's the mirror of our openness. Feel how full your breath is at different times. If you want to see what's happening in you, pay attention to your breath. Is it real big, can you take a nice full sigh? Sighs are wonderful. Do you know about sighs? Everybody takes sighs, generally about once a minute, as far as I know. We do! I noticed more because of my father being on the respirator from his heart surgery two months ago when I was there. They put a tube in his throat and they have this respirator which breathes for you when you can't breathe. It has this funny thing on it. It has a

little dial on it which says, "Sigh Adjustment," and you have to sort of get it right for that person. It will make eight regular even breaths, and then there will be this big breath that it takes for you. It does that because it's part of the normal respiratory system to take regular sighs, regular big breaths. It was wonderful to see. It kind of made concrete this sense of what the breath is when it is big, when you can sigh, it is a kind of letting go. That's beautiful. So sigh. Let yourself sigh once in a while. Make it your meditation.

The breath is a mirror of how we are. Have you observed your breath when you're afraid? What does it do? It gets short. What else do you observe with your breath? It gets more rapid. Sometimes it stops. Can you feel what it does in your body? For a lot of people the diaphragm won't move hardly at all and there will be a little breathing from the chest. All kinds of changes happen with fear. Observe it. If you want to learn about fear, one good place to start with is the breath. Or when you are angry, what does your breath do? Or when you're passionate, or when you're calm, or when you're in a traffic jam, what does your breath do?

You can learn a tremendous amount in this very simple mirror of working with the breath. You can learn about openness. How does it affect your heart? When your breath is really open, what is your heart like in terms of your feelings and openness, your connection with people around? When you feel your heart closed, without judging it, look and see what your breath does and what it's like. Does this make sense to you, that you can use the breath in some way? It doesn't mean to say that the breath is always going to be wonderful and open -- That's like saying your heart should always be soft and wonderful and open. I don't know; it's not my experience. It's like flowers, they open and close.

I remember a very important and extraordinary lesson. I was sitting around with Robert Hall, whom some of you know, who is a Gestalt therapist and body worker, and one of the people who started the Lomi School. He spent a lot of years in his own practice of developing ways of working with the body, and opening, and energy, and breathing. We were reading a book about the life of Ramana Maharshi, this great Indian saint. And there were some pictures of Ramana Maharshi in the last part of his life with cancer, and his body was contorted and twisted and it looked tight. It certainly looked like he couldn't breathe very well, it looked like he couldn't move very well. And the description from the people who were with him was that he was in pain, and that he would go to sleep, and there would just be these moans and things that would come out of his body. And at the same time his eyes were exactly the same as those pictures of five or ten or twenty years before. They were wide and bright and completely clear, and there was just this real sense of depth and love. Robert looked at that and he said, "My God, here I am trying to get people to open their bodies and it really has nothing to do with it, does it?" That's not completely true. It is one end of the spectrum, but it is also true that if you breathe and if you open, and if you run, and if you exercise, that the physical opening helps the heart and the mind to open.

In fact, the heart is the heart, and it can be open in fire and it can be open in ease. But for most of us, and most of the time, breath is a mirror. It's really something to work with. You can work with it in martial arts as a way to martial your power. You can work with it if you have meetings. If they're boring or difficult, go to your breath, do ten breaths, where you just pay attention to your breath, and you'll find all your relationship to all the circumstances around you change. It's a practical tool

for living in the world. Now, what makes it practical, what makes it useful?

What makes it useful, aside from the fact that it's a mirror, is that it's the place to learn the art of concentration. Concentration has two parts to it. One part is the quieting or the tranquility. Without that we don't so often hear the voice of God, as Mother Teresa said. She says:

> We need to find God -- or whatever you want to call it, our true nature -- and this cannot be found so easily through noise or restlessness. God or truth is a good friend of silence. See how nature, trees, grass grow in silence. See the stars, the moon, the sun, how they move in silence. The more we receive in silence, the more we can give in our actual life.

The first part of this element of concentration is using the breath to learn to become quiet or tranquil, to become still; not to seek quiet so much but to slow down. Our culture is so fast. We fill up our lives all the time. I know it very well when I look at my schedule book. I lived for ten years without a schedule book while I was teaching -- until I got married and had a baby, and all that stuff. And it was really a shock to get another day-by-day or week-by-week schedule and start filling it up again. It's not just that. It's the speed of the traffic, it's the speed of the news, it's the speed of our interaction. Somehow in it, we forget. Do you know what it means to go for a walk for a little while on Mt. Tamalpais or down to Point Reyes or somewhere in the country, and what it does for our ability to feel the sea of air that we live in, or to stop and reflect what we care about in our lives, or to feel the tension in our body, and somehow let it melt a little bit, or to spend time alone, to listen? Somehow I think that our speed is partly what makes the bombs. I don't think we could do it if we were slower. I really don't. So that's the first part of concentration, just slowing down a little bit, letting things settle, stop waving our arms so much.

The second part I want to go into in some depth for the next twenty minutes or half an hour is really to talk about what it's like to work with the breath as a vehicle for concentrating the mind and heart. It is somewhat technical. I've given lots of other kinds of talks. Hopefully, they are of some use for you if you're doing some regular meditation.

To concentrate the mind means to collect it, to have it become steady or one-pointed, like a candle flame in a windless place, where it's steady and it doesn't flicker so much. Every great spiritual and yogic tradition works with concentration. Do you know that? Whether it's the Hasidic prayers or the Jesus prayers or mantras or the shamans who do certain kinds of incantations or rites to concentrate the mind, not to speak of Buddhist and Hindu yogas of every kind; they all work with concentration. Do you know why that is? Do you know why? Does anybody have any idea why? Why is concentration is so stressed to collect, to concentrate the mind -- do the breath, do a mantra, focus on a light, focus on a prayer, do it over and over again, sit out in the woods as an Indian and roll a little stone around a big one until your mind gets concentrated and you have visions? Does anyone know?

THE AUDIENCE: Just to keep you present?

JACK: That's the first part of it. That's very nice. Because you can't understand what's real or true

except in the moment. Otherwise, it is thought about past and future, so it's fantasy. So that's one good reason. What else?

AUDIENCE: Gives you something to work with, collects your mind so you can use it.

JACK: Collects your mind so you can use it, and it gives you Something to work with, which means it gives you a vehicle to collect it. Is that what you mean?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

JACK: Okay. So that's another reason to concentrate, in order to find a way to collect the mind. Collect the mind to be present. Why else collect it, why else concentrate? Any other reason?

You hear of all these yogis in Egypt and the Desert Fathers, in India and the Taoist monasteries learning concentration exercises. What for?

AUDIENCE: For me, it's like my energy is running off in all these different directions, until I can collect my energy and focus it.

JACK: So it's a way of focusing energy. That's another good answer, another good part of it.

Mind is like light energy, and it can be focused in several ways. If you begin to concentrate it, it's like collecting light energy in a laser. Instead of having it scattered in all directions, if you concentrate, the power of mind becomes usable when it's collected. You can train it at something and penetrate it. Another image to use is that of a lens. If you concentrate the mind, it's like grinding a lens. If you focus and you concentrate, and you come back again and again, and it becomes steady and still, you can see as if the mind were a microscope or a telescope. You can see into all other realms of consciousness through the power of concentration. Concentration is the main vehicle in almost every yogic and spiritual school for altering our level or our perspective of consciousness.

When the mind is scattered and filled with thoughts, mostly all you see is your ordinary reality. Ordinary reality is real too, but part of what helps free us is to see that it's relative, that there are some other perspectives in life. And concentration is the vehicle to discover those other perspectives. It's also the way to learn to live in the present moment, so then you can see what is true.

Suppose you were to start and work with concentrating on your breath, what would the stages or steps be like as you followed it? Here are some of the things: The first is that you just learn to get here as suggested. Okay? You count one to ten, or you count one to a hundred, or a hundred to zero backwards, or you note the rising and falling of the chest or in and out of the air, and finally you start to become more present.

Ryokan says:

> My hut lies in the middle of the dense forest.

> Every year the ivy grows longer,
> no news of the affairs of men,
> only the occasional song of a woodcutter.
>
> The sun shines,
> I mend my robe.
> When the moon is out I read poems.
> I have nothing to report, my friends.
>
> If you want to find the true meaning,
> stop chasing after so many things.

That's the first step for us in watching the breath, not chasing. Here's an ad I just cut out:

> HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT:
>
> Admit it, you want something bad, a new car, a bigger house, a more challenging job, a clean garage, a chance to unload that stuffed wolverine. You want something and you want it now. But it takes more than the power of positive thinking to make your dreams come true.

The first level of working with the breath, of watching it, not chasing after so many things, is counting, is watching the in-and-out, it's just getting here with the reality of the moment, of the breath coming in and out. That's already a lot, as you probably noticed in sitting an hour and trying to work with your breath. I don't mean that one exclusively works with the breath, because in vipassana we work with sounds and thoughts and feelings, but tonight I just want to focus on the power of working with the breath.

First you get here, you count, or you feel the in and out, or the rising and falling. Then the second level is that you can start to relate to the space between breaths. Has anyone done that in working with the breath? So you see, there's the in-breath, and there's the out-breath, and there's the rising and falling, and as you get a little more silent you start to see, "Hey, there's some room in there, there's some space." And it has two important points. One is that it begins to teach us to relate to something that's less than busy and full all the time, just teaches us to relate to the elemental quality of silence, of openness, of space, by feeling the space between the breaths.

We don't take enough time to sense space, we keep filling it up. So this little thing in the breath has something to teach us. Or if you like -- this is a technique that's useful for some people -- you can begin to use that space as a way to further continue the refined concentration by working with some points of touch. For some people they just sense space, in-out, then, "Ah, there's some space," and then the breath comes again, out of nowhere. For others, because the mind wanders a lot in that space, and it's difficult, they find it valuable to be aware of the touch point, of the lips touching together, or the hands in the lap, or the buttocks on the cushion -- in-out, touching, rising-falling, touching, in-out, lips touching; so that things start to become continuous and the mind doesn't wander off.

W. S. Merwin in this poem says:

> First, forget what time it is for an hour.
> Do it regularly every day.
> Then forget what day of the week it is,
> and do this regularly in company for a week.
> Then forget what country you are in,
> and practice doing it in company for a week,
> and then do them together for a week
> with as few breaks as possible.
>
> Follow these by forgetting how to add
> or to subtract.
> It makes no difference.
> You can change them around after a week.
> Both will later help you to forget how to count.
>
> Forget how to count,
> starting with your own age,
> starting with how to count backwards,
> starting with even numbers,
> with roman numerals,
> starting with fractions,
> with the old calendar,
> going on to the alphabet,
> forgetting it all until everything
> is continuous and whole again.

This is the second step, of somehow learning to relate to space or things which are disparate, and our mind which is scattered -- it comes back to being more whole again. So we start to watch the breath, and we get to the point where we can let go of the past and the future and be a little more present, and there's the in and out, and we can relate to the space between breaths, and we see the breath as the mirror of our emotions. You can learn a lot. You can learn a lot by observing anything. Here we're just going into one little aspect of experience, our breath.

Then what comes, as you can relate to the space and the touch point more, you get to the point where you can let go more. It's called, "Letting Go of Some Control." And in truth, one of the greatest aids to concentration is relaxing. Concentration isn't a forcing of your mind on your breath, or on the pain, or on the pleasant sensation, or on the thought. It's much more a sense of the opening, of the softening, of the receiving. That's what allows the mind to settle, to settle on the breath, to settle on the sensation, to settle on the sound. It means our learning how to not control so much.

Have you noticed, for many people, when you start to work with the breath, there's this tendency to hurry it up, or to move it, or to change it, how it takes a little while? It takes some systematic

training to work with the breath, where finally it just breathes itself.

I remember this friend of mine, an old Tibetan monk who I met in this forest monastery. He was actually Hungarian but he ordained with the Dalai Lama years before. He said the Dalai Lama let him go up in the mountains and visit the hermits who were in their caves, who saw almost no one. He went with one of the Dalai Lama's teachers, Ling Rinpoche. He visited them. He was kind of a neophyte at that time, just learning. These people had spent 20 or 40 years in their caves or their little huts. He said, "Well, what technique do you use?" They said, "Techniques?" He said, "Yes. Do you use a mantra, do you follow your breath?" He said the first time he asked about that one of them just laughed and laughed. He said, "The breath, it breathes itself." That was all he said about it, the breath just breathes itself.

This is the letting go, of actually seeing that the world has a natural order that runs itself. We try so hard to control it. Take a rest, you know; put your feet up a little bit. You don't run your heart or your liver, and they do real good without you, you know. "Ah."

There's counting and there's getting here. There's the space between and relating to space, and the touch point. And then there's learning to let go and relax a little bit, and start to sense the natural order rather than controlling. The breath is a vehicle for seeing, like anything else. You can start to see in a more refined way, you start to see the beginning and the middle and the end of the in-breath, or the beginning and the middle and the end of the out-breath. That's an amazing thing. Most people never saw the beginning of a breath in their whole life. Why is it valuable? Who cares? So what if you can see the beginning of a breath, what's its purpose? Anybody got an idea?

THE AUDIENCE: You see that it comes and goes, that things come and go.

JACK: That's very nice. That as you start to listen, if you really concentrate, you see that wherever you are is being born and is dying; that every breath is a birth and a death; every movement, every sensation, every sound, every sight. You start to relate to one thing that maybe we need to learn about -- besides love -- and that is birth and death; that is, the arising and passing of things.

Here the breath is teaching you about the thing that everybody wants to know: What happens when you die? A lot of people do! For some people it's the last thing they want to know. "Don't tell me, I don't want to hear." But a lot of people want to know. If you want to know, look at your breath, the beginning, the middle and the end -- so you start to see it more clearly.

There's a beautiful *sutra* on the mindfulness of the breath, and here the Buddha says to some monk: Go, you guys, and find yourself some comfortable tree root underneath some tree out there, and cross your legs and sit down and close your eyes, and see if you can discover the whole nature of the world from your breath. It bears great fruit; cultivate it regularly; bring it to perfection. First, breathing in long, I know I breathe in long. Breathing in short, I know it's a short breath. Experiencing the breath in the whole body. Calming the body with the breath. Observing the breath as it arises and passes, calming the mind using the breath. There's this whole set of instructions, two thousands, three thousand years ago saying: Okay, if you want to understand about life and death, very, very simple, here you are: go take this and work with the breath. Sit down in some quiet place

and you will begin to discover it.

The next stage is refinement -- seeing the beginning, the middle, the end, what breaths are long, which ones are short, when it's held, when it's released. Then more refinement, which I'll get to: the four elements, and the mind and body. I'll get to that in a bit. So you start to refine it. You see, "Oh, here's birth and death; here's the beginning and end of things."

Then the next stage is what I call Training the Puppy. It's like, "Okay, stay," and the puppy gets up. "Stay," and it gets up and runs around. "Stay", and you do it a million times, and since the inner puppy is much more recalcitrant than the outer puppy, it finally starts to begin to learn. What's involved in training a puppy? Has anybody ever trained a puppy, outwardly trained a puppy? First of all, it takes some patience, doesn't it? Okay. And you have to be willing to let it shit all over a little bit if you want to have a puppy house broken or sit down.

Similarly it's true with the mind. As you start to concentrate, you will meet a wall or a sea of resistance. It's called *kilesa* in Sanskrit or Pali, which means "hindrance" or "defilement". It really means "burning in the mind." For example, if you try to do a kind of macho, and muscle your way into concentration, which you can do if you want -- you can experiment with it. Say, "I'm just going to concentrate on the breath and not let my mind move" -- try it for an hour, and you will see what I mean about fire, because it is very hard for the mind to slow down. It has its own momentum like a flywheel. Your mind will kick up and throw out every reason to stop. There will be old angers, new desires, pains in the body, sounds, reasons to move, and every possible thing other than feeling the breath. It's an interesting experiment to do, just to try it, not because that's really the way to learn to concentrate -- you'll wear yourself out. There is a way to do that, but it's very, very hard. Why not take it a little easier? It actually doesn't take that much longer as long as you're persevering, but you can do it. And what you discover, even when you do it more gently, is that as you start to collect it, all the resistances come up: fear, desire, anger, distraction, plans, or memories.

Part of what it means to concentrate the mind is to purify it. I don't use that word so often, but it's an important one for this learning how to deepen meditation. Purification means that there are all these forces of grasping, of fear or anger, or whatever, that keep pulling us in every direction, and to collect it or to balance it means not that we get rid of these, but that we learn somehow to let them come. And almost like the fire that comes and burns through, we don't grasp it -- we let it come and we let it go.

In watching the breath, if you start to work regularly with the breath, maybe you do it half of every sitting, or some part of your practice, then all the things which we call for the moment *kilesas* or fire or hindrances, they will all reveal themselves to you. The purification is to honor them, to give them a little kiss when they arise, let them go gently, to see them, and then come back again to the breath. And they are powerful. They are the force that kind of pull the mind around in circles.

The first thing in training the puppy is that you come to your resistance and you learn about what it means to work with resistance. If you struggle against it, it makes it twice as hard, and if you do it gently and say, "Oh, there it is, there's desire or anger wanting to take me away again," you let it go, and come back. You can really learn how to train the puppy, how to train the heart.

Once you've gone through the resistance, then the next thing that happens in training the puppy is a sense of interest. Then it's borne more fully out of this. There are two ways to express it. The first is that as you get through the resistance, even watching the resistance is actually very interesting. Has anybody ever seen what it's like when they try to put their mind somewhere or what it does? It's like a fish out of water for awhile, it just flops everywhere. Look at it! It's interesting to see what it is that keeps us out of the moment.

After awhile, as you do it, and you keep bringing it back again and again, the breath starts to have its own interest, which is like reading Agatha Christie. In the beginning the story may or may not be interesting but as you go along and you get the plot and you get all the intrigue, you really start to wonder who did it and what's going on. Similarly with the breath. At first it's difficult, but if you work with it for a while, it actually starts to become interesting. And just when you're reading Agatha Christie near the end and someone walks in the room, you don't even hear or see them because you're so interested in "who done it."

When you finally get through some of the resistance and you really start to concentrate on the breath, it gets interesting, and all of those other things which had disturbed you pass away much more easily, and you actually enjoy feeling it and seeing what it's doing.

Now, the kind of interest one sometimes needs to go through is the Zen story of a young boy going to this master who has a monastery on a stream, and saying, "Please teach me." And the master says, "You're not really sincere." "What do you mean I'm not sincere? I want to learn." The master says, "Go away." And the boy comes back again and again. Finally, this young boy comes and says, "I really want to learn." The master says, "No, you don't," and he grabs him and throws him in the water and he holds his head down under the water. The boy is kicking and screaming. Finally he lets him up when he's just about blue and out of breath. The boy asks, "Why did you do that?" The master says, "When you want to learn what I have to teach as much as you wanted that breath, then you can come and I'll teach you." That actually comes of itself.

Interest is something that also can be cultivated, can be nourished, can develop. If you work through these things that come, and you stay with it, there's an interest that comes all by itself. It's one of the factors of enlightenment; it starts to come by itself.

So it's training the puppy, working through the resistance, having the interest arise, and then you get to what Suzuki-roshi calls, "Burning Completely." He says:

> In order to not leave traces with your thought, when you do something, do it completely with your whole mind and body. Like a good bonfire, you should not be a smoky fire, but learn to burn yourself completely. Throw yourself wholly into whatever you do.

That's an art, that's a gift, to love a person, to take a walk on the beach, to paint, to dance, to do your taxes, but to do them completely and not do something else at the same time. If you'll save a little more money when you pay attention that way, I don't know. But do things really completely.

There's training the puppy, going through the resistance, and discovering that the breath actually

has a lot to teach you, that it's interesting. Then the next is coming to rest. When you've finally done that, and you start to get interested, and you've done it for awhile, you come to rest on the breath. It's like what Don Juan says, "Stopping the internal dialogue" of trying to plan, and remembering or going off into the past and future and worrying, all of those things. No trace of thought, finally coming back to where there is less desire, instead of trying to keep bringing your mind back. At first, it's like a mountain, and you climb up to the top and you balance and stay on your breath, and then you fall off into sleep or restlessness, and then you struggle up, and there you are with the breath or in the moment, and you fall off, and after awhile it becomes like a valley. You do it again and again and again. Finally, you actually start to settle on the breath. It's like the mind comes to rest in the body. It will go off in sleep or restlessness or desire, but then it slides back down and you come to rest in the moment. And it's delightful, coming to rest!

Out of the coming to rest, then come the Factors of Enlightenment. There comes lightness and joy and a tremendous sense of ease; and the body, once it starts getting concentrated, changes completely. Even if you wanted to slump, you can't. The energy opens up, the breath opens up, and you just sit up straight. You can sit up straight for hours when the breath is open and you're concentrated. It happens all by itself. You don't need so much sleep either. That's good when you have babies and things like that. It happens all by itself.

And then something else comes -- light. When you really concentrate on the breath, or whatever, this very peculiar thing happens. With your eyes closed, there comes light in the mind. Some people see it as clouds, some see it like headlights turned onto them; some see it as a bright sky or sun; some see it initially as colors of green or blue, but later on it turns into white light. I don't know why, but when the mind is concentrated, it fills with light. It's not that far away. It's really accessible to a lot of people.

This afternoon I was reading these essays by Lewis Thomas. In one of them he said:

> You know, we're so afraid of God in this country, in this century, in this scientific mind that we have. Even though we talk about the creation of the universe -- the scientists call it, "The Big Bang" -- there is no bang. For sound, which is a very gross level of energy, you need air for sound waves to travel. There was no air. it was empty dark space. There were no ears to hear it. There wasn't sound. What it really was, instead of a big bang, it was the great light.

That's a more accurate description, whether it's true or not, of what that first cosmic explosion was, or whatever you want to call it. It's a little scary to call it "The Great Light," it's a little bit too spiritual. So we'll call it "The Big Bang." It's sort of like a tank or something like that, and scientists can relate to it in some way. So what happens? You come to rest and you come to this sense of peace and then spontaneously in the mind comes light. It's this fantastic thing. That's part of the reason why all these yogic and other traditions also work with concentration, because it opens the mind and the heart to allow our natural light to shine. And it's literally light. I mean, you can sit in the dark and it seems like lights are being shone on you, many, many kinds of light. The mind becomes stable and joyful, rapture comes when it's peaceful.

Why is there joy when the mind is concentrated? Does anybody have any idea?

THE AUDIENCE: Freedom from yourself.

JACK: That's a good one. Getting away from oneself is always a treat. Why else?

THE AUDIENCE: It's a natural state.

JACK: It's a natural state, so there's rest. There's another simple reason.

THE AUDIENCE: There's nothing else you want.

JACK: There's nothing else you want, which is to say, when you're really concentrated, the rent check, your girlfriend, your difficulties with your parents or your children, next year's travel plans, all are gone because there's no thought. The past and the future have disappeared, and when they're gone it gets very groovy. It gets real quiet and very happy because there's no worry and there's no fear. Fear is always about something that hasn't come, so is worry, so is desire.

This is kind of the anatomy of what the present moment can have for you in some ways. You get to this level of lightness, joy. Now, the ability of mind is another thing that happens. If you train concentration, you get to a point where this amazing thing happens, where you decide, "I want my mind to be here, to listen to sound." You put it there when it's trained in concentration, and it just stays there, and you listen as if you'd turned the radio to a particular station and it just stays there. There isn't thought or restlessness and interruption; it just stays there. Or you say, "I want it to focus on this," -- small or large -- and the mind becomes malleable, shapeable, movable. It's the most delightful thing; it's fantastic. And you can do that.

These kinds of education aren't part of our school system, but they are really our birthright. It's the training of our own heart and our own mind so it becomes joyful and light, peaceful and malleable. Then what happens? Guess! Are you ready?

THE AUDIENCE: You try to hold on.

JACK: You get attached, that's right. It's called, The Corruptions of Insight which arise, the defilement of Spiritual Materialism in its refined form. You say, "This is groovy, I want more of it." It's like any other drug. And you get attached to the light, or the lightness, or the joy, or the peace, or whatever it is, and then you find that you're stuck there. So you have to discover even in that moment that there's some deeper level of freedom. You're still working with the breath and all these states come and you try to hold them. Let them just come and go. Those too are not freedom; they're simply very groovy states of mind. They're very pleasant, they're illuminating, light and peaceful but they're temporary. Has anybody had a state of mind stay? Somebody last week yelled out "ignorance". In general, it's not the case. Do you know what I mean?

So you do this, and you get to where the mind becomes stable and clearer, and so forth, and you're with the breath and it becomes so fine. It's like the tiniest leaves or the littlest movement. It's almost like the body breathes rather than the breath breathing, or the spring air comes and breathes you.

It's wonderful. And the state of mind is very peaceful and you stop grasping it.

Then you reach what's called Access Concentration. "Access" means it gives you access to all the realms and all those weird spiritual texts and things you read about, because at this point there are very few thoughts. You rest in the present moment. The mind is very clear, and tranquil, malleable, alert and mindful spontaneously, without struggle. There's a kind of clear seeing. Then things start to reveal themselves to you out of this Access Concentration. It's almost as if the mind or the lens is clear, like a crystal goblet, and you can see deeply with a microscope or a telescope way out into space.

Has anyone heard of the biologist named Agassis? There's a big museum of glass flowers at Harvard. He was one of the great botanists around the turn of the century and before. A student of his went to begin his training as a botanist in the l880's, and Agassis took him and said, "You want to learn to be a botanist or a biologist. Here, take this fish," and he took this kind of dead fish and sat it on a piece of glass in front of him, and he said, "Study it, observe it, and tell me what you can see about it." Then he went away. He left the student there in the morning and he went away for the whole damned day. The student stayed there for awhile. He looked. There's a dumb dead fish, right? He really got bored and more irritated that his mentor and teacher didn't come back. "What did he want? Sure it's a fish, it's got fins, it's got eyes, it's got scales, it's got six fins, it's a six-fin fish, and it's got a little yellow over here near the gills, or something like that." There was nothing especially interesting about it. It was like many he had seen before -- scales, mouth, eyes, yes, a tail. In an hour he thought he had seen all there was to see. Time rolled on and the teacher didn't come back for a long time. He was getting angrier and more irritated. Finally, after he had gotten back from lunch, he was so discouraged. He wished the dumb old man had given him something more interesting. Then in order to kill time, he sat down with a piece of paper and he started to draw the fish, "Alright, I'll draw it." In drawing, he began to notice things. He discovered, for example, the way that the scales overlapped one another, and then he began to see as he drew the eyes that the fish didn't have any eyelids. Then he began to see the textures of the veins in the scales. He kept on looking and drawing and it got very interesting to him, and he drew for the whole afternoon into the evening.

Agassis came in and looked at his drawing and said, "You haven't even begun to look at this fish yet." The guy was heartbroken. The teacher said, "I'll come back in a couple of days. You let me know what you can really see in the fish." He spent two more days drawing different sides and aspects of the fish. And he said those three days, that particular training was the foundation of his entire graduate work and his whole career as a botanist.

We're not taught that so much in our culture. But here we are with the breath now. We're up to the level of Access Concentration. As you sit and start to get quiet, you're at the level where you're in the present moment, not so distracted by other things, and really with the breath, what can you begin to see? You see the four basic elements that make up the physical world, what Plato called, "Earth, Air, Fire and Water, and maybe the Egyptians or the Indians throw metal in there as well. I don't know why. More or less the same system. They aren't some theory -- earth, air, fire and water -- they are a description or actually how you perceive physical matter.

Put your hand on the floor for a second. What do you feel? Tell me what you feel.

THE AUDIENCE: Hardness.

THE AUDIENCE: Softness.

JACK: Hardness or softness. What else do you feel?

THE AUDIENCE: Cool.

JACK: Temperature. What else?

THE AUDIENCE: Rough.

JACK: Rough. Okay, so there's the texture. What's the roughness? Go into it with your attention. What does roughness actually feel like?

THE AUDIENCE: Highs and lows.

JACK: Okay. So it's shape, but it's also different areas. Pay attention. See if it's not different areas of where it's hard here and soft there; just hardness and softness alternating. What else do you feel? So there's temperature, and then different areas of hardness and softness. Anything else?

THE AUDIENCE: Dry.

JACK: So you feel whether it's moist or dry.

THE AUDIENCE: Flexible.

JACK: So there's movement, the solidity or lack of it. Anything else?

THE AUDIENCE: Space.

JACK: What's the space? I don't feel space.

THE AUDIENCE: Between the hardness.

JACK: So you feel points of hardness and lack of it. Okay. What else? One more thing to look for especially. It's still, it's not moving. Can you feel that? Okay. Do you feel "floor"? Anybody feel "floor" or "carpet"? No such thing for your hand, but there is this hardness and softness.

Similarly with the breath, if you observe it, instead of there being an in-breath or an out-breath or a rising or a falling, if you look at it closely like the guy looked at his fish, what do you see? You see what's called the Fire Element or the Temperature Element. Sometimes parts of it are cool or hot. You see temperature or you experience temperature. You see the Earth Element, which really is the element of hardness and softness, and sometimes there's pressure, which is more hardness, and sometimes there's not much pressure in it and it's soft, or there are little dots of pressure and space

in between where there's less pressure. So you see hardness and softness in the breath, you experience hot and cold, you experience fluidity, the Water Element. And the Air Element is really the element of motion or vibration, so you experience it when it's still or when it's vibrating or moving more.

Does anybody ever experience anything else through their physical senses? Temperature, pressure, hardness and softness, movement, solidity, vibration. So what happens when you observe just this simple thing of the breath and your mind is concentrated? Play with it in your sitting. It doesn't have to be that concentrated, you just have to get here some. You can start to see that what you thought was breath or floor or wall through your body senses is actually this play of the basic elements. You can find everything that Plato and the Chinese philosophers and all these other people who are physicists have looked at. What is basic sense perception made of simply in the breath? There is no breath. There's coolness, there's little tiny, very soft pressure; there's vibration and movement; that's all. You know in the belly there's expansion, which is a different shape of that same pressure, and hardness and softness. That's it! And the whole world, instead of being solid, starts to reveal what its nature is, which is the play of the physical elements.

Then you'll start to see the mind, the Mental Elements. This is called *nama* and *rupa*. *Rupa* is the Physical Elements that you perceive, and when you look closely they're all a dance, they're all changing. There's no floor, there's no wall, there's just changing sensations. This is using the mind as a microscope. When you start to look closely and to experience it, it seems solid on this level, which it is, and you can use your mind the same way someone uses a microscope. You look down into the pond water and you see it's alive with things. And if you look at anything closely with your concentration and awareness, it dissolves into a changing dance of sensations. And then the Mental Elements, which are feelings and reactions and the consciousness which knows it. I won't go into that so much tonight, but you start to see the play of these two things, of Physical and Mental events. That's all that there is, this dance of light and shadow and the perception of it. You see more deeply the arising and passing of things then, so you get to a deeper level of birth and death, and you see that not only every breath, but every sense door, every sound, every sight, becomes vibration. Everything that you look at from that refined quality of the breath starts to teach you the movement of life; Impermanence; The Dance.

You can learn so much just watching your dumb breath, really, and there's a lot to be seen in it. And at times admittedly it's boring. You learn about boredom when it's boring.

And finally, the last thing to say about it tonight, just to go into this a little more, is that at that point one also has the possibility, besides the discoveries of insight, of seeing that it's really changing, arising and passing mental and physical states, empty of any person, no separateness at all. All the kinds of wisdom that one reads about are available in just observing the breath.

One can also enter all the realms of what are called *jhanas* or high states of concentration. When the mind becomes so settled on the breath, then there arises joy, rapture, tranquility and concentration, and the concentration is applied and it stays there; it's sustained. You can turn your mind to space and just experience what it's like to be with space without any wandering of mind, the formless *jhanas*. You can turn your mind to a color, blue or green, and develop it until the whole

mind becomes filled with a particular color and the energy of that color. Then, when you do this, and you cultivate it really well, you have Access Concentration. If anyone is interested in this level stuff, most of which I have not done -- I've played with it a little bit, not the powers part -- in this book, "The Path of Purification," there are chapters on how to develop concentration, and then ones with all the psychic powers, because all the powers of mind come from the power of concentration; how to read other people's minds or how to walk on water or how to do all these things. I don't know whether you can really do them. I haven't seen many of them done except maybe reading of minds. But it's said that they all come through this tremendous power of concentration.

The way to walk on water apparently, if you want to know, is to develop concentration to this very high degree where the mind is totally stable on the Earth Element until you become like the earth itself, and then you focus on the water and you walk on it. One of the teachers where I studied in the Sun Lun Monastery said:

> In these days, although concentration of mind and some of the insights and opening are very possible, many, many people can do that, the level of concentration for the supernormal powers are difficult to acquire.

Let us say that one practices the Earth Element exercise and gains a mastery of it. To do the psychic power stuff, you not only have to be able to attain these very high levels of stability of mind, but you have to master it so you can go in and out of different ones in a moment's notice. Suppose you've mastered it, and I know a few people in Asia who have mastered these things to some extent.

> Let us say that such a yogi then goes to a pond and seating himself near it, arouses in himself the element of the earth meditation. Then looking upon the waters of the pond, he endeavors to turn them into earth, so that he may walk across them. He will find these days at most that the water thickens to a slushy earth which cannot really uphold his feet when he attempts to walk on it.
>
> Perhaps yogis in other countries have done better than I, but I believe the times not so opportune as they used to be.

This guy is furious.

I'll read one poem from Kabir to end, and you may have heard it before. This is Kabir, a wonderful Indian poet. He's talking about a clay jug, which means one's own body or a clay jug; it doesn't matter; they're the same. He said:

> Inside this clay jug, there are canyons and pine mountains
> and the maker of canyons and pine mountains.
> All seven oceans are inside, and hundreds
> of millions of stars.
> The acid that tests gold is there,
> and the one who judges jewels,
> and the music from the strings no one touches,

and the source of all water.

If you want the truth,
I will tell you the truth,
friend; listen.
The God whom I love is inside.

How can you see that in your body or in a cup, whatever cup you want, all seven oceans and hundreds of millions of stars? You can, through your inner vision, through the eye of concentration, birth and death, and every realm of existence is possible through this collection and concentration and focusing of the energy of mind. Like a laser, like a telescope, like a microscope. I'm not suggesting that you do all that yogic stuff. It's fun but it takes years and lifetimes to do some of that stuff. It's good, it's nice to do. However, in a much more practical way, you can work with the breath. You can take half of your meditation every day, fifteen minutes or half an hour. You can work with it when you are running or jogging. You can work with it when you're in a meeting, how to calm down. When you get really quiet, and you take some time to meditate for part of a day or you sit, then you can start to really study it like it was that fish or like it was a flower. And in it you can learn a lot about birth and death, about all the resistances and the fears and the fires, and what it's like to let go of them and to rest in the present moment. You can learn a lot about the elements that make up who we are, the physical elements, the mental elements, consciousness itself. All of that can be revealed in the simple thing of observing the breath.

I give it to you tonight as something to talk about, to give you some sense and maybe a little inspiration, that even in this very rote and simple exercise, there are worlds to discover. Just as if you could take a flower and pick it and really look in it and understand that one flower, you could understand everything in one flower.

The Eightfold Noble Path
-- Right Awareness

Sometimes I think the translation of the word "mindfulness" is incorrect in two ways. Right Mindfulness is a step of the Eightfold Path and is the centerpoint of Buddhist practice. First, it's not a good translation because "mindfulness" is kind of an insipid word. "Be mindful" -- what does that mean? It doesn't have the kind of inspiring quality of spaciousness, courage, or living fully. Perhaps if you pronounced it differently and said, mindfulness, that would be a better understanding of the word and its power. But a more fundamental difficulty in even talking about mindfulness, whatever that means for us, is that the mind and the heart are the same word in Sanskrit or Pali. So perhaps a better word would be "heartfulness" -- live in a heartful way. Forget about this mind stuff all together. You could do without a lot of it, if you haven't noticed.

The Buddha very often said that mindfulness was the heart or the essence of his practice -- to be heedful or aware -- that was the road to liberation and to the deathless, to freedom from even birth and death; that is, freedom from being caught in the cyclic nature of things, stepping outside the cycle of things.

What does "mindfulness" mean to us sitting here as a group. We sat for an hour this evening or a little bit less, but for those of you who have attended regularly, we've been sitting here for a year doing something supposedly related to paying attention and being mindful. What does it mean? What are the qualities of it, what are we doing here? We sit, we pay attention to the breath, or our body sensations, or the sounds, or the people walking by, or the various thoughts and images in our mind.

To be mindful first means simply to come into the present -- to listen with our senses, with our heart, with our physical body, with our ears, with our eyes, to what is actually here in the present; the body, the heart and the mind. It's that thing I've spoken of many times before, the sign from the casino in Las Vegas, "You must be present to win." In Las Vegas, in therapy, in meditation, it's all the same thing. In order to awaken or to use our life in a skillful way, the first task is to get here, to start to live in the present moment, which means not living so much in our fantasies, in the future, not living so much in the past, in our images and memories, and reliving things that are gone already.

The first is learning to be present, which itself is a very wonderful thing, because"here" and "now" and "in the present" are the only places that we can appreciate life to begin with. Otherwise, it's kind of second-hand, what happened a few years ago -- that's a nice memory -- or what we fantasize about. Where can you really appreciate this life we're given? Only in the present.

Also, there is something else which interests a lot of people and can only be found in the present, and that is love. If you want to love a person or you want to be loved -- some of you perhaps know

anyway, right? -- where does love take place? Or "when" is a better question. Again, it's a nice memory, "Gee, I was in love once or twice" -- or more in some of your cases. It was very nice. It evokes a nice thing to remember it. Or it's in the future, "Oh, if only I could meet that right wonderful person," or "this person that I live with," or "this family," or whatever, "if they would change so they would become right, then I could fall in love all over again with them or be happy with them." The only place that you can really love a person or be loved is in the present. No other possibility for it. All the rest is fantasy.

Also in the present comes the possibility of touching our intuition, of creativity, of clarity; all kinds of things. So the first aspect of awareness is simply learning in some way to live more fully here in our present reality. If you learn nothing else from meditation practice than that, you get your money's worth -- especially since there's no charge.

Secondly, mindfulness or heartfulness mean seeing clearly. It means non-grasping, non-greed, non-hatred, it means not pushing away, and it means not going to sleep, but seeing what is present for us. Bare attention, remembering, being in the present, without trying to change it somehow, which is a hard thing to learn because we're generally planning on what we're going to make this something into next. But then what happens? We end up doing that all the time and missing all the somethings that are here, always waiting for the next one.

Mindfulness is really a way of learning to see what is here in a very clear way. People talk about learning mystical things in meditation or spiritual life. There is nothing more mystical, or startling, or bizarre, or amazing, than what is right in front of us. In my days I've done a lot of strange things. I've been to a lot of different countries on this planet, and observed *saddhus* on beds of nails in India, and strange animals in other parts of the world, and in my early days I took a number of the various kinds of psychedelics and drugs one could take, and have had all kinds of realms and weird experiences, and all kinds of things in meditation. I have never encountered a realm as peculiar, or bizarre, or as interesting as this one.

Someone said:

> The mystery of life is not a problem to solve,
> or something that you find somewhere else,
> but it's a reality to experience here.

We went to the zoo with the baby on Sunday. If you landed on some weird planet, and then you saw pygmy hippopotamuses or 300 pound ostriches and really wrinkled elephants -- Did you ever look at elephant skin? Just amazing! -- or the kind of snakes that are there, or sloths hanging upside down, you would say you had come by your spaceship to a really peculiar planet. And yet we forget that. We start to take it all for granted. It all becomes very ordinary, and it's not. If you attend a birth, it's an amazing thing to see a baby being born out of a human body. How does that happen? How does it get in there? I know you know how it gets in there. But I mean, how does it really get in there? Like the ship in the bottle. An incredible thing happens in there, the baby coming out of a woman. And we take it for granted.

So to pay attention means to somehow have a newer or a fresher vision, to see clearly. It means to stop our judging and our planning and just see what's here, which is part of what we do in meditation; to stop and not judge a single thing; let it be exactly how it is. Let God take over for a little while and run the show rather than our minds, which get very tired, and very full, and very busy anyway, and need a rest.

Someone said:

> The classic question is: If you pay attention and you don't judge, then how do you live in the world? What part of attention or awareness is that?

That's called *sampajanna*. *Sati* is mindfulness, *sampajanna* means clear or right comprehension. It means not only do you pay attention to what's here, but then when you act in your life you also look at the context, at the suitability or the intention of it; what is present. When you act, you first have to see what's here, and then some intuition, or inspiration, or thought arises, "I'll do this or do that." It's to pay attention to where your heart is, what motivates you, what the intention and the purpose of your action is, so that you pay attention but you also note the context.

The way Joseph, my colleague and friend, answers the question when people say, "When you just pay attention and note 'lifting, moving, placing' in the walking, or the in and out of the breathing, how can you live?" He said, "Well, I was doing my lifting, moving, placing one day on a road in India near the Burmese temple where I lived, just moving my feet and paying attention, and all of a sudden I heard 'clang, clang' of the bells, and I recognized it. I knew what those bells were. I looked up and sure enough the elephant that lived in town was coming down the road right towards me. I noted 'hearing, hearing' and 'seeing, seeing'; then I noticed the intention to move out of the way arise, and then I walked out of the way."

So there are two parts. The first is seeing what is here, living in the reality of the present, and then responding to it wisely, being aware of the situation that we're in.

At times this year I've talked in this class about another aspect of awareness which I think is really important to remember in our lives, and that is the very interesting question of why we don't pay attention; why do we go to sleep, why do we drive on automatic pilot, why do we eat three meals a day, two-thirds or three-quarters or ninety percent of it on automatic pilot? Why do we live so much not here? It's a pretty interesting question, maybe even more interesting than saying, "One should pay attention or live in the present." How come we don't?

There's a story:

> When Krushchev pronounced his famous denunciation of Stalin, someone in the Russian Congress Hall was reported to have said, "And where were you, Comrade Krushchev, when all these innocent people were being slaughtered?" Krushchev paused, looked around the hall, and said, "Will the man who said that kindly stand up?

> Tension mounted in the hall. No one moved. Finally Krushchev said, "Well, whoever you are, you have your answer now. I was in exactly the same position then that you are in now."

Why is it that we don't pay attention? One reason is fear, that if we actually come into the present, there are certain things we have to deal with that we haven't had to in our lives. For some people it's boredom. We're really afraid of being bored. For some it's loneliness. For some it's grieving, something in their hearts that's not finished. So it's better to distract yourself, see a lot of movies, talk to people, keep yourself busy, stay on the phone, and keep yourself working, so you don't have to feel certain things.

Another reason we don't stay awake is habit. You could be very peaceful, not have any grieving to do, and be comfortable being alone, and so forth, but it's like there's this huge flywheel inside. And there you are. It's a quiet day, you're just sitting down in the park, and all of a sudden out of nowhere you start thinking about what you'll do next week or next year, making plans, and playing back memories, because there's this powerful habit of thinking. It takes training to kind of release the clutch and let it slow down. That's part of what meditation is about.

Also, pain is another reason, because if you live in the reality of the present moment, what do you experience? Up and down, light and dark, night and day, and pleasure and pain. And if you don't like pain which a lot of people don't -- understandably -- then what you have to do is manufacture some fantasy, to live in a lot of thought and busy-ness so you don't feel it. However, you rob yourself of something very, very important when you do it, which is that you rob your life of living, of heartfulness, of fullness, of vitality, of your existence.

To live in the present means that you have to face your boredom and your loneliness when they come. They're not there all the time, and they're not so bad actually when you come to terms with them. They're a little scary but they're not so terrible. And you have to face the fact that there is this habit of greed, and hatred, and fantasy, sort of a machine that spins out thoughts out the habit of it. So you have to be willing to be aware of pain as well as pleasure. But if you are, the rewards are fantastic, because then you can really experience being with another person, walking down the beach, taking a walk in the park, walking outside and seeing the stars.

It's really very interesting to start to pay attention to when we go on automatic pilot. If you were to look at something in your meditation, rather than trying to be aware, try to be mindful of when it is that you go to sleep, what it is that's hard for you to be aware of. That is something that is quite interesting to learn about. Use it as a signal. "I haven't been very mindful today. I wonder what's going on? I haven't been very mindful this week. I wonder why? What's happening? Oh, I'm sad. It's hard to be sad, so I have to keep myself busy," or "This thing is coming up that's difficult to deal with, so I think a lot and plan, rather than just notice that it's really hard." We learn somehow to find the center in the moment rather than toppling forward or into the past.

If you let yourself do that, then everything stops. And one of the most wonderful things about awareness or heartfulness or mindfulness is that it allows us to come to rest, because there's really only one place to rest, which is in the present.

We're householders, we're not monks and nuns. And the question often asked is: In order to be mindful does it mean we have to talk slowly and sit many hours a day and go into an ashram or some monastery? How can we bring mindfulness, heartfulness, wisdom here into our lives? How do you do that? Well, of course, as I said in the past few weeks, sometimes you do have to look at your life and see if you want to slow it down a little bit, if it's crazy, if it's real busy. Because our culture is a little bit mad in that way, you might need to take a look and see, "Gee, is it time to stop doing a few things, to make a little more space, to slow down?"

Fundamentally, "mindfulness" means to learn to be aware where we are. If not here, where else? If not now, when? Mindfulness is the opposite of "if only," it's the opposite of hope, it's the opposite of expectation. It has in it a certain kind of contentment, not that one might not choose to change the world, but a kind of acceptance that this is really what we get, these sights, these sounds, these smells, these tastes, these perceptions. This is it! Then in another moment, there will be another "it." It's not something else. "I know that this is all it is, but this is it." When one accepts it, then one can come to rest.

Mindfulness in a way is the opposite of grasping, or attachment, or identification. And it can go very, very deep when we allow ourselves, because what we start to see -- if we slow down a little bit and pay attention -- is how it is a kind of conditioned phenomenon, like a machine, the mind spins this stuff out in a very orderly way by habit -- thoughts, fantasies and memories. The world works in certain conditioned patterns, and that's it's nature, and it's all impermanent and quite ungraspable. Where is yesterday? What happened to your weekend? Where is it? What happened to 1984, your 20's, or whatever it was -- maybe you're 20 now. For some of you, your 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's, where did they go? They all disappeared, gone. Isn't that an amazing thing?

It's a very profound thing to start to be aware of life coming out of nothing and disappearing into nothing. A day appears for awhile, and then it's gone. It can't be grasped, it's like a bird flying. You cannot hold time and fundamentally you can't hold yourself.

So the spirit of mindfulness is learning to live in an awake way. As the Buddha said, "I'm not a man, I'm not a God. I'm none of these things. I'm awake." How can I convey the spirit of this? There are songs from the monks and nuns who lived after the Buddha died that are in these poems. If you read*Therigatha*, the songs of the sisters, there are many enlightenments that take place while they're walking through the forest. One nun is in the forest talking about how happy she is that she doesn't have to do housework anymore and she drops a cup or something like that on the ground, maybe it breaks, and all of a sudden she's enlightened. She says, "Oh, that's how it is." Things arise for a while and then they pass away. If you can accept that and see that -- each day, each moment, with each person, to experience what's there -- and then leave it and go to the next, you can live in a deeply free way. So it really has the spirit of aliveness to it.

In the monastery it was beautiful. We had all these rules, 227 major precepts and then some hundreds of minor precepts, and then they told you how to fold your robe, which side of the bowl you should put down, and how you should clean it properly. Even how to pee. There is a particular way monks are supposed to pee. You're supposed to squat down, you can't stand up, and you can't pee into water where there are obvious living things or on plants because you might harm them, and

things like that. At first when I read this, I said, "Well, what's the difference if I squat down? Nobody is looking, first of all. These rules are dumb." But after awhile of living them, in this beautiful forest monastery, where there wasn't anything else to do besides meditating and following the rules, which would drive you crazy initially, what you began to see is that somehow they brought you to see that everything was precious, that everything was worth caring for; that it mattered where you peed, that you could pee on the ground and not on a bush, and not harm it; or that it mattered how you took care of your bowl, which was one of your very few possessions. It was a gift from people who said, "We want to support you because we think that monasteries and what you're doing is valuable in the world and reminds all of us of something precious. So we'll give you a bowl."

You take care with your bowl, you take care with your robe, you take care with your car, you take care with your house, you take care with your clothes, because to be aware in some way means to remember the preciousness of life and to begin to take care with the earth and all the creatures and things on it. It's to be aware of ourselves and our bodies, of our actions, to be aware politically, to be aware economically, to be aware socially as well.

Imagine if you were told that you have some disease, let's say AIDS because there's a lot of it that's happening, and it's both scary to people and very immediate and present, and real important to look at. Someone said, "Well, at best you have four years, maybe you have a year to go." How would you start to live that year? Things would change for you, I assure you. Your life would become a lot more alive and precious for you. Or imagine that you've been in prison for a long time, as people are in many, many countries of the world. Amnesty International said that 55 countries have political prisoners who are imprisoned and often tortured because of religious views. The majority of the large countries on the earth imprison people for what they think. It's really painful. And then you were let out after a long time in prison, how would it be just to walk down the street in San Anselmo? What would the trees be like? Just the experience of being free, watching the cars, being able to go into a confectionery store and order any kind of sweet that you wanted, or just seeing the sky and feeling the air and being able to decide whether you're going to go down the block to the right or to the left. It's that spirit of heartfulness, of mindfulness that it comes to. It's not so much that you're supposed to be tedious about it at all, but it's somehow much more the spirit of an appreciation of life and of seeing it in a clear way.

I remember when I was seven years old I spent a whole summer in bed. I had this kind of infection and I couldn't leave the house. And then when it ended and I finally could go out, I was given something like a dollar, which seemed like a lot of money at that time, and I went and I bought a ball and some bubble stuff, and I went to this big park near my house. It was like being let out of prison for a kid being in the house for a whole summer. I was so happy. To this day I remember the sun was shining, I could blow my bubbles and turn cartwheels and throw my ball and do anything I felt like. It was so wonderful. In some ways, that's part of the spirit of bringing awareness to our life. It also means, as I said, that we have to be willing to face that which is difficult, to open to what Zorba called "the whole catastrophe," and to appreciate it in some way. It's really quite a trip.

So first it means to take care with the earth, to learn that awareness means to receive, to see the preciousness of things. Secondly, then it allows our world to teach us, to let it teach you very simple

truths which are the most important. For example, one monk went to his master after a long time of training and begged the teacher to give him enlightenment. The master led him over to a bamboo grove. He said, "See that bamboo there, how tall it is? See that one over there, see how short it is?" And the monk was enlightened.

Things will teach us when we see them afresh, when we see them anew. We see them for a minute, we see the ungraspability of anything, of our own bodies -- they change -- of our thoughts, of our feelings, not to speak of the people and the things around us. -- changing, ungraspable. And that they do. Sometimes they're big and sometimes they're small. That's the way that things are. It teaches us the preciousness of life. When we pay attention we can learn. We can learn from our families. We can learn when our hearts are closed and when they're open. We can learn what it means to be attached, what it means to let go and be freer. We can learn about all the forces in the mind. We can learn about doubt and fear and anger, through awareness. We can learn about love and kindness through attention. It's really universal. We can learn to play tennis in a better way.

To train ourselves to be aware is the gift of the Buddha. He said: Here, I'll give you a gift that can make life come alive for you, that can bring both happiness and freedom. And it's a very simple thing. Learn to train yourself to live more in the present. Do what it takes to do that in your life. How can we do it? Here we are, householders, right; not like we have all day to sit and walk in some monastery.

Some hints perhaps. First of all, as I've said in previous evenings, one of the most beautiful expressions of awareness comes from Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh where he says: See if you can learn to wash the dishes in order to wash the dishes. Usually we wash the dishes in order to get the dishes clean, right, and then we can get on and do something else, right, or talk to someone. Did you ever do anything like that, where you just did it in order to do it? Maybe we let ourselves do that on vacation. You go hiking in the Sierras, and if you're not too driven -- "Can I get to this camp site by this hour," or something -- and you let go of that a little bit, you just walk along the mountains in order to be walking, everything becomes what it is. It's beautiful.

That's the first hint, to start to take some things in our lives and do them for their own sake. Does that make sense to you? Another way is to listen with your heart a little bit more, to try to pay attention to what it's like when you're with people, and see if you can let your words come out of your heart, to say really what you feel inside, what you care about, and to listen with your heart rather than your mind. That's a very good way to wake up; especially the people you live with -- your kids, your spouse, family, and things like that.

People say, "How can you be mindful at work? I'm a writer," or "I'm a mathematician." These are some of the questions I get at retreats. "How do you do math mindfully? You have to think and ruminate." Or, how do you write mindfully, or watch a movie? The best I have been able to come to in that is that when you write, just write; when you watch a movie, just watch the movie; when you read, just read. Not writing and also thinking how people will view it when you're done writing, and planning, and seeing how many more minutes you have to write, and so forth. Just be present for the writing. It doesn't mean to think or be in some special mode. Just do what you do. Not so complicated. When you do math, do math.

Of course, sometimes it gets a little more complicated than that, and at retreats I've often told the story of Zen master Soen-Sa-Nim who generally teaches his great Zen teachings, "When you walk, just walk; when you're hungry, eat; when you're sitting, just sit." So there he was at the breakfast table eating breakfast and reading the paper. Students who saw this were very upset. "You know, you're the Zen master. You tell us, 'When you eat, just eat,' and here you are eating and reading. How do you explain this?" He said, "Very simple. When you eat and read, just eat and read."

The spirit of it is not so complicated. It's not to make something really false or different about it. It's more the quality of being a bit more where you are. I think that comes from Yoda in Star Wars. Another thing is to remember the power of the act of coming into the present.

I told the story a few weeks ago of Robert Aitken-roshi who wanted to go to Japan to study Zen during the Korean War. It was considered a war zone and people weren't allowed. When he went to the consul or the ambassador who was a very learned and dignified Japanese man, he was told, "I'm sorry, we just can't have visitors; it's war time. The American government doesn't want it and the Japanese government is following that." The ambassador offered tea. It was very nice. He said, "Why do you want to do that? I mean, there's this war we have to stop." He took his cup of tea and he picked it up and he drank it very carefully and silently, and then he looked at the ambassador and said, "Taking a cup of tea I stopped the war." With that the ambassador was wise and he understood that, and he arranged a visa for him to go to Japan to study.

What we do, if we do it with our full heart and our full being, is a way of bringing the planet back into balance. All you have to do is look at the news or read Time or Newsweek; it's crazy. And it's crazy because it's all mind and thought and going in circles and it's not connected with the heart and the earth. Taking a walk you stop the war, taking a cup of tea, sitting a little bit every day, you stop the nuclear arms race because you let yourself get quiet and feel the earth and the air, and then your actions and your vibrations and the effect you have on other people, and maybe even the concerns that you act out politically, all come from that connection with yourself and with the earth around you.

I have a good friend who is lawyer from Harvard Law School, a very fine lawyer. He sits through lots of meetings. He said he has really learned to work with his breath. Communication is kind of redundant. You could probably tune in on every tenth sentence and get most of the meaning of things. He is really in love. He says, "I love my breath. It's much better than what goes on in the meetings." So you can use your meditation in grocery stores standing in line waiting for checkout, or traffic jams. Wonderful times to meditate.

I remember sitting at my teacher's cottage. He sort of sat in a little chair, and people would sit around and he would receive visitors. I was sitting there and waiting for him. It was a really hot day. Usually they had iced coffee on a very hot day in the tropics. Iced coffee is first so good because it's so cool and delicious; and the Thai coffee is half sugar. And secondly, since you don't eat except one meal in the morning, to have a big glass of dark iced coffee filled with sugar is like about three or four hours of caffeine and sugar stimulation before it wears off. It's great sitting. It was a great drug for sitting, there's no question about it. I was kind of in the doldrums. "I've swept my cottage, now I'll go over and I'll sit and I'll wait." And on hot days like this, if the teacher sees a lot of people

sitting around, he says, "Okay, you can bring some iced coffee for these poor starving monks," or whatever. So we sat. I kept thinking about how I was going to go back and meditate. I'd get to my cottage and then after I had it, for two or three hours I would be very alert and awake, and I'm kind of sitting there sweaty and hot and a little bit depressed and just waiting and waiting and waiting. He must have known it, and I'm waiting and waiting. Hours go by and other people come by and I'm waiting and waiting. I think, "God, when am I going to get this wonderful coffee so that it will perk me up and I can really meditate?" Waiting, waiting. It never came. Finally, it became real clear after a lot of hours of waiting; waiting to meditate.I was sitting there doing nothing. When are we going to meditate? "I'll do it when I get to the sitting, then I'll meditate," or "I'll do it tomorrow." Somehow it's to remember that it's here in the present we're talking about.

In some way, mindfulness means coming back to our real home, coming to rest in the present. It is our real home. And our real home is not connected with grasping, our feelings, our bodies, our thoughts, our images, or all the things that are changing -- but it's the ease that we can find in being with up and down, light and dark, and all of this duality which is changing. With an open heart, with heartfulness, with mindfulness, being with it as it is, then receiving it and deciding, if we will, what things to choose to respond to in a wise or compassionate way.

This is Don Juan to Carlos Casteneda:

> For me the world is incredible because it is mysterious, awesome, stupendous, unfathomable. My interest has been to convince you that you must learn to make every act count in this marvelous world, in this marvelous time, I've tried to convince you. You must realize that you are going to be here for only a short while. In fact, too short for witnessing all the marvels of it. I wanted to convince you that you must learn to make every act count.

The spirit of awareness or mindfulness really means coming into our life, into the physical senses, into the feelings, into the movement of mind, and into the heart, and living each day from our heart. What do we care about? Taking a concern and a care for the preciousness of the earth. In the end what one discovers is that mindfulness and love are the same thing. To be aware, without grasping or resisting or trying to change -- to receive what's here -- is to love it; that they're not really separate, that the heart and the mind come together. Or as one of my teachers said: The mind creates the abyss and the heart crosses it. The mind creates distinctions, and coming into the present, into the heart, resolves all of that.

The talk in a way is a reminder. Let me ask you a few questions as a way of ending. First of all, what keeps you, what keeps each of us from really paying attention in our lives, from living more fully? Just think about it as I ask. What fear or difficulty in your life keeps you from living here in the present? What illusion or misunderstanding in your life keeps you from living here in the present? What would you have to do to make your life really support living mindfully? What would you have to change to make a real support for this mindfulness or this heartfulness? What would you have to change in your life to allow yourself to love more fully? And the last question is to ask in your heart should you make those changes. See what it said. Generally, it has a good answer.

Even mindfulness, however, cannot be grasped. There are days when you're going to be more mindful and days when you're less mindful. And it too, like all things, comes and goes. What you can do is nourish and find ways. That's what we do together here. We sit together, sometimes we have discussions and questions, sometimes I talk to myself out loud and you get to participate, sort of listen to it. It is a way to remind ourselves that there's something really precious. Spiritual life is pretty simple. It's not easy but it's pretty simple.

Householder Series:
Hindrances of the Householder (I)

I've asked old students, people who have sat in meditation for quite awhile, what kinds of things they were working with after five or ten or fifteen years of practice. They say, "I'm working with fear" or "I'm working with habit and desires that arise over and over" or "I'm working with laziness" or "I'm working with irritation" or anger; common kinds of energies. What I hear even from people who have sat in meditation for a long time is the same list of the five basic hindrances that are discussed in the second day of every retreat. It seems that they stay around for awhile. So I'd like to look at them in the context of people who have been practicing for awhile and living their lives, and see how we can continue to work with them since they seem to be part of our family life, so to speak, or inner family life anyway.

How can we understand the hindrances or the traditional difficulties in meditation in our daily life? First of all, it is important to understand, as you go on in the path of spiritual practice, that often the weaknesses or difficulties that we encounter are the places that most wake us up. The places where we seem most successful and the best of things are often also the places that are the strongest part of our self image or our "ego" in some kind of Eastern sense of that word. And it's the places that are our very difficulties and our vulnerabilities that often allow us to grow in a more genuine way when we look at them, when we work with them.

There was a wonderful paper that was written a few years ago by Seymour and Sylvia Boorstein for the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, and it was called "The Five Hindrances of Marriage." It talked about the difficulties that the Buddha described in meditation -- desire, anger, restlessness, laziness or sleepiness, doubt -- and it describes the process of marriage as encountering these exact same forces. Desire for something else or better. Irritation and anger, especially when you discover that that person really isn't behaving in the way that you expected and hoped and planned for them, and all the irritation and frustration that comes from that. The third hindrance of sleepiness or laziness, discovering after awhile that one can get complacent in relationships. Or the opposite -- restlessness, the traditional Seven Year Itch; after a certain cycle in a relationship, one gets restless for something new or something different. And doubt. "Is this the right person?" or "Is this the right way to be living?" and the same forces which arise when one sits in meditation and tries to open one's eyes inwardly, and one's heart and mind seem to arise in relation to the people we're closest to, and all the other people at distances from us.

Can you recognize that? Can you see that there are parallels between the sitting and other things around? There are all kinds of stories that we make up about these states. "He did," and "she did," and "I will," and "she should," and so forth. It's useful to see that those stories are based on kind of

myths that we build about ourselves and the world, identities that are created mostly by thought, and, in fact, things are a lot simpler than that.

This is from Achaan Chaa:

> Traditionally the Eightfold Path is taught with eight steps such as Right Understanding, Right Speech, Right Concentration, and so forth. But the true Eightfold Path is within us: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, a tongue and a body. These eight doors are our entire Path and the mind is the one that walks on the Path. If you know just these things, and the states that arise with them, all of the dharma is in front of you.

We all have these stories about experiences, but actually our experiences, if we want to live more in the moment, are much simpler than that, much simpler than our stories.

Let's talk about the five hindrances a little bit and maybe reflect in some ways how they arise, not just while sitting, but all the rest of the time, which is what practice is for. You sit and practice in order then to live it. That's why it's called "Practice."

Desire is the juiciest one of them. As Oscar Wilde said, "I can resist anything but temptation." It's the one that we get caught up in in different ways. It's amazing, wanting is a very powerful habit. We can want anything, and it changes from one thing to another. We desire one thing and then we desire another. In the retreats, as you know, there's the phenomena of things like The Vipassana Romance where people are silent and not looking at anyone and just paying attention, and they notice some interesting shape or something out there, and then they just sit, and all of a sudden the whole idea comes, what it would be like to maybe meet that person, and talk with them, perhaps after the retreat to go out and meditate together, or some other activity like that. And that goes on, you know -- marriage, children. In California it usually includes divorce as well, if you really play it all the way out. And without making eye contact with that person, the mind spins out this fantasy of things that will fulfill it better than whatever experience is here, with the breath, or the body, or whatever is actually here.

That same movement can be observed, if you look, all the time in our life. It's called the "If-Only Mind." It's the mind that arises in the moment of experience and says, "If only I had something else," "If only I had a different partner," or "If only they behaved in a different way," or "If only I had a different job," or "If only I had more free time," or more money, or a house more in the country, or a house more in the city, or "If only I were younger," or "If only I were older," or whatever. It's always the same state. I watched it when I was a monk and all I had were a few books and a robe and bowl. Possessions were really minimal. Even so, I found myself thinking, "If only I had a little nicer robe." It has nothing to do with what's around us. It's this movement inside of feeling like what's here is not enough. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Nasrudin says:

> Never give people anything they ask for
> until at least a day has passed.

Someone said, "Why not?"
"Experience shows they only appreciate something
when they have the opportunity of doubting
whether they will get it or not."

One of the interesting things when you start to look at and work with the hindrance of desire is to see that what relieves it, what makes one finally happy about it, is not so much the thing that you get, or the person, or the experience that you get at the end - this is important, so listen to this - it's actually the fact that the state of desiring has ended. I'll give you a simple example. Suppose you have a craving for some food that you really want to have. It can be pizza or ice cream or cannelloni, you name it, whatever it happens to be. You go and you get it. You do all the things. You get in your car, you go, you finally get it, you have it in your hand, and you take the first bite of whatever it is. And usually the moment that you taste it, there's this great sense of delight and release, and so forth, and part of it may be because it tastes good and it's pleasurable, if it's part of your fantasy -- but the main piece is, in that moment, finally the wanting stops. Do you understand that? And that a good deal of the joy of fulfilling desires is not so much of the getting of the thing, because you have it for a little while and then you want the next thing -- it's endless -- but rather that there's a moment where the wanting itself stops. If you look closely in yourself, if you let yourself look, you find that the very process of wanting is painful; that the very state of not being complete or content or present with what's here is what the pain is about.

That's a familiar hindrance. Let's talk about some of the others, and then talk about ways one could work with them in one's life. Of course, the first piece is just beginning to understand how these operate in ourselves.

The next four are quite interesting. Anger, sleep, restlessness and doubt -- even desire to a certain extent is included -- I tend to see them all as states of avoidance. They're really states which arise so that we can avoid something, some aspect of what's true in our experience. Maybe I can explain that as we go along.

Anger, which includes irritation and judgment and boredom, not liking what's present, fear -- all of those are the movement of anger. It's a very painful state, for the most part, if you look at it. The body has a lot of tension, there's heat, there's burning if you're angry. Even irritation has a lot of tension in it. Yet in some way we do it again partly out of habit. Another reason that we do it is because it makes us feel right in some way. You know what I mean about being right. That's the favorite feeling of many people because it's the feeling that most authenticates the sense of yourself.

Two weeks ago when we talked about Forgiveness somebody stood up or raised their hand and said something that was really powerful. They said, "Here we are, stewing and raging and angry about something that someone has done, and very often they're off going about their own business enjoying themselves. And who's suffering? It's us because it wasn't that way, and we're so angry, and it should have been, and so forth. And who is doing the holding on at that point? I'm not saying that you shouldn't be angry -- you can be angry or hold grudges; you're welcome to do anything. -- We're just looking at the laws of how it operates.

I remember I was sitting at this one monastery for a long time meditating, and I had a bout of anger about something, which I have regularly, and I went to the teacher and told him how angry I was about something. It was in the hot season and he was wearing those little flip-flop sandals. He got up and went over to the table where we were sitting and he kicked the table leg. It looked like it hurt him. Then he held his foot and he hopped around for awhile. Then he sat back down and kind of massaged his foot. Then he looked at me and he shook his head. That was his response to my being angry. He just kind of acted out what we do. Just like desire, where we can desire anything, and it doesn't matter what it is, the force is there, and we get our food, or our relationship, or our car, or our vacation, or our time off, whatever it is, and then we look for the next thing because it's so powerful. The same with anger. We can get angry at anything, including things that are already past and nothing can be done about them. And even more, we can imagine something which somebody is going to do, and sit there and get really angry at what they might do. Have you ever seen yourself do that?

We project our righteousness on other people in some way. We project our pain, is really what it's about; that we're in some kind of pain, and we make it somebody else's fault. Also there's as much suffering in the world as we experience at certain times, and we don't want to take it in because it's so hard for our hearts, and our culture is one that doesn't train the human heart very well to deal with the measure of pain that's part of life.

I got quite angry today. In fact, I was really yelling at somebody. I won't talk about the specifics so much. I felt so indignant and I felt so right that it was very hard not to do it. It's interesting to observe. It's not like anger is some terrible thing, or that it won't arise, or that all these other states won't arise, or that there might not even be an occasion where it was appropriate. There are some occasions for that, especially if you're able to let it move through you instead of storing it as resentment and all kinds of other things, or if you use it in a way that isn't really intended to hurt other people. That's a whole other talk about anger.

But here we are, living in a pretty busy and complicated world, and we see this state of being angry, or being irritated, or judgmental, arise very often, and yet we are the victims of it. It's we who suffer from it. The question, when it comes, is: How can we relate to it? It's really the pain in us that we're talking about. If we can look at that, then we can touch the world and heal it a little bit. It's very difficult to do without healing our own pain.

Let's talk about laziness, and so forth. I said all of these are avoidances. Very often anger is really a way of not feeling the pain of someone else or what our own experience is. Judgment and fear are the same things. Sleepiness is the same. Sleepiness, the habit of going unconscious. When is it that sleepiness arises? There are three basic causes for it. It comes when we're tired. That's the first one. And that's a good signal. You sit in meditation or you find yourself at other times having sleepiness. arise for you; then take a look and see what are the causes. Now, if it's just that you've been working kind of hard and you're tired, that's one thing. Then you just respect your body and maybe take a rest.

But because we're in 80's in California, in a Western culture, how many people when they get sleepy or tired are living in such a way that it's really a signal? How are you living your life, how

busy is it, how full is it; where are we going that we fill it up so much? Does that make sense to any of you? So that's a signal. It's a signal even if it is just tiredness. Let's look at what pace we live at, or let's look of how we fill up our lives, and what we might be avoiding in some way in doing that.

One part of sleepiness is just that we're tired. The second is that we are unaccustomed to stillness, that our culture moves so fast and we get into that rhythm. Then when it's time to stop, and you sit to meditate or you walk outside, or you go home you kick your shoes off, you start to think, "Maybe I could meditate. No, I'm too tired to do it." The way I put it in retreats is: When we start to get quiet, there's some little voice in there that says, "Oh, it's quiet; it must be bedtime," because it's one of the few times we stop. It's a response in us, when we start to get still or concentrated or quiet. And sometimes the fear comes, "Oh, this is too quiet, what will I do with this? It's too empty, there isn't enough activity for me to know who I am," because we define ourselves by our activities.

The third reason that sleepiness arises is that it is a kind of resistance. You will notice yourself becoming lazy or sleepy at certain times in your spiritual life not because you're overtired or not because it's too quiet. And that's an unfamiliar state that you need to work with, to learn to open again like a child; but because there's some pain or sorrow or grief or difficulty or conflict that's kind of hard to feel, it's easier just to be sleepy about it. Has anybody noticed that happening in their lives, or how often it can happen?

Our culture is amazing. Not just our culture, it's worldwide. There are ten million drug addicts, and 20 million alcoholics, and 50 million people who are close to those drug addicts and alcoholics -- and their families or family-systems, who are really painfully touched by that; deeply so. And more than half of all the car accidents where people are killed and 80 or 90 percent of child abuse and the great majority of fires at home, and all of those things, are involved with alcohol and drugs. And the level of pain, if you start to work with people around the family systems of alcohol and drugs, and so forth -- it's extraordinary. Yet, the purpose of all of that, for the most part, is to cover pain. A friend of mine who worked in a drug program for many years said that generally speaking the amount of drugs and alcohol used is equal to the amount of pain in the person, not to be too simplistic about it. So that's what I mean by avoidance; that there are states that arise for us that keep us from feeling.

Restlessness is a different one. The vibration, the movement, the habit of our culture is to be speedy. TV, shopping, eating, traveling, the telephone, all of these things, where we keep ourselves busy because we don't know what to do. We're not taught as we grow up how to nurture ourselves in stillness, how to listen more to the breeze, or the clouds, or the trees, or the children, or the people around us, or how to just sit on our porch and rock in our chairs a little bit and watch stuff go by, as people used to do, instead of constantly being busy with it. I have to confess I'm one of us in that one. Somebody from Europe who heard my dharma talks wanted to sit a long retreat and came to a three-month retreat. They said they were so disappointed in me because I tend to move pretty quickly, and they said I seemed more like an Italian shoe salesman than a calm meditation teacher. And it's true.

Someone who has done a lot of vipassana practice and has worked with eating disorders, has titled one of her books feeding the hungry heart. A lot of our busyness is because we're looking for

something to fulfill us. So we eat or go shopping or travel, or pick up the phone, or turn on the TV really compulsively at times, because there's something we want -- and it doesn't quite do it. That's the kind of restlessness. The ability to just stop and be, like when you're in a traffic jam where you say, "Here, I am on the Golden Gate Bridge; I might as well feel the bridge vibrate and kind of look at what the shipping is doing, instead of thinking of where I could be or being frustrated." It's to be with what is.

There have been a number of movies from Australia. I remember one called the last wave, with pictures of the aborigines. One of the things that most struck me about them was that when the aborigines sat down, they sat. It was like they sat and they could have been on a rock, Ayers Rock or something, and they just sat there, and they could have sat all day and all night and all week. But you don't see that in our culture; you see this sense of movement almost to the extent where people can't sit still, can't pause, can't stop because of what would they feel.

Someone asked Nijinsky about his dancing, how he could dance in such a marvelous way, and he said that there had to be some stillness in it. He said:

> It's really quite simple. I merely leap and pause.

What a description, "I merely leap and pause." Can we learn to stop a little bit? Maybe that's all that meditation is about, just to stop. Then the last hindrance is doubt, confusion, tension, kind of wondering, "What should my work be, how should my spiritual life go, am I in the right relationship, am I in the right workplace, am I in the right part of the country." We Americans have the curse of choice. That's not a trivial thing. It enlivens and it enriches the culture and our lives, but it's a very difficult thing and it's not so for most cultures. And usually when doubt arises strongly it does so because our heads, our thinking apparatus is not connected with our heart. If you look in the moment where there's a lot of confusion or doubt, it's there because there's much thought and not much connection to the heart, to what we might do based on our deeper values.

Another way to put it is: when there's a lot of doubt, often connected with it is a lack of love for ourselves or a lack of love for the other, for the world around us. If we're in touch with that love, our path becomes pretty clear. Do you remember the question I asked the night of the talk on Forgiveness that came from Gandhi's tomb along the Ganges in Delhi where the question was inscribed in stone:

> Think of the poorest person you have ever met, and then before acting ask if or how this act will be of benefit to that person.

Confusion generally comes when we're not in touch with what we really value in life. And again, it requires a stopping, an opening, a listening inside.

These are the hindrances. Are they familiar? Certainly they are. They are our companions in the journey. We see them over and over in sitting, we see them over and over in the world outside, in the cause for war. When I was angry there was a very strong impulse in me to call and register a complaint and try to solve something. And then being met by aggression, it was very easy to see if

someone chooses to be your adversary how easy it is to take up the banner and say, "Alright, I'll do it. I'm a man. Why not?" or whatever it is. That's one of the problems, yes. But it's worldwide -- prejudice, greed, fear and desire; these same forces that create war or that create grain elevators full of food in one place and hungry people in another.

The question is: Are they workable? Can one work with these forces? Lama Yeshe in that excerpt that I've read about his time being in the hospital and going through all the great difficulty with his heart attack, said:

> Can you learn the basic precept of transforming your unwanted sufferings into the path of practice?

If you can learn that precept, it will serve you in any circumstances. Can you learn to do that? Can any of us do that? What does it take? A key thing that it requires is faith. It is so important -- faith in the human heart, faith in the power of awareness. The Dalai Lama was asked what was the most important thing one can do as a teacher of dharma, what's the most important thing you can communicate, and he said "Faith." Not faith in the Buddha or faith in something from India or some ancient system, but really faith in our own true nature. Rock bottom understanding of that, not just with words but because you know that it's true that human beings have this capacity to deal with the sorrows of the world and with adversity, and that the heart is greater than all of that, and that the power of awareness is such that we can grow from any of it. That's what we have to discover -- in ourselves, in our sitting, in our families, in our lives. Faith, not so much in doing but in stopping, in listening, in not doing so much, and letting ourselves stop avoiding things that are difficult, not getting so caught by the stories of what we want or what we don't want. That's all the mind. Minds do that, it's sort of their job -- you pay them a little bit and they just think all the time.

Rilke talks about it quite beautifully in a poem which he calls, "I Have Faith in Nights."

> You darkness that I come from,
> out of which all things come,
> I love you more than all the fires
> that fence in the world,
> for the fire makes a circle of light for everyone,
> and then no one outside learns of you.
> But the darkness pulls in everything,
> shapes and fires, animals and myself.
> How easily it gathers them,
> powers and people.
> It is possible a great energy is moving near us.
> I have faith in night.

Amazing poem, darkness out of which everything comes.

Can we stop -- in our practice, in our lives with our families -- and start to listen, and let ourselves be a little emptier, a little more silent, more in touch with the spaces between words or between

desires or between frustrations? There is something really mysterious that reveals itself as soon as we stop. It doesn't take very long, and maybe there's a certain pain that one has to go through in putting on the brakes, if you know what I mean -- each time, again and again, too -- but when you do it, then things become mysterious again like it is for any child.

Walt Whitman said:

> As to me I know of nothing else but miracles
> when you're still enough.

The source of our happiness is not through our doing, it's really much more through stopping. How can we work with our hindrances very specifically? First of all, if you identify the most popular ones in your own personal repertoire, it helps a lot. If you're going to go to the theater, you might as well know what play is on. I've talked on some nights about Buddhist personality typology, which is based on our responses that come out of the sense of separateness itself; and the three roots in Buddhist psychology are the greed type, the aversion type, and the deluded type.

Just to remind you in a simple way, we all have all of it in us. I'm a great example of the greedy type. The general response of the greedy type is to go into a new situation and see what we like about it, and see how we might get more of it, what's lovely about it or what we appreciate. Forget the rest. Now, the aversion type -- my wife is more in that category -- is somebody who goes into a situation and sees what's wrong with it, which is a very different response, painted wrong, the colors are wrong, and people are behaving wrong, and so forth. And then the deluded type whose tendency is to go into a new situation and not know what to make of it, not know what their place is.

Does this make sense to you? Do you understand these types of either wanting or being critical or not knowing your place in it? There's a lot more. -- There's the Buddhist families, Ratna, Padma, Vajra, all these styles which I might talk about a little bit more. What's interesting is that each of these also has a positive side, which we'll get to later, things that can be transformed in us. The point about this is that it begins to become useful if we want to work with the hindrances in our daily life to start to see what our own patterns are. Is it our tendency to get irritated all the time, or is it our tendency to go to sleep all the time, or is it our tendency to eat to avoid, to use desire in that way, or is there some other tendency?

My teacher Achaan Chah used to be very forthright about it. It was part of his teaching style. He would kind of give nicknames to a number of his monks and people around. It was a little bit like The Seven Dwarfs _ Sleepy and Dopey and stuff like that. "This is a monk that's always into eating. Oh, here's my monk, why don't you meet him? This is Sleepy. Whenever I visit, go to his cottage, he's always sleeping," and so forth. He did it with a lot of humor.

You've got to start to look at what is your particular way of not being present. The thing is that they're not bad. You don't have to say, "Well, I'm a bad person," because this is just the nature of being born with a self-structure or having it develop in early childhood. What's important is to see that it's actually very alive, and that if you can begin to work with it, it's interesting. Aren't you

interested in yourself? Fess up! Come on! Why not look at the patterns that we use in relating to things? It's really juicy and it can be transformed.

The first thing is to see what are the popular patterns in oneself. So I ask you that for yourself -- which are the ones that you use? Then the second, after you recognize that, which helps you to kind of keep on the lookout for them, is to begin to identify mindfully the state or the experience as it arises in the moment, or as close to the moment as you can -- the wanting or the fear or the desire or the doubt. And a little while later you say, "Oh, here I am in it," and to identify it by acknowledging it. It's very useful to use a label, "fear, fear" or "desire" or "wanting" - just give it its name in a neutral way. You really see the force as an opportunity to learn. "Alright, I've had 29 years or 48 years of this mostly being my pattern. Let me really look at it. How soon does it come? What situations cause it to arise? What does it feel like in the body? What's going on with me in that moment? What's the experience like?"

So the second thing is to identify it, the best you can, without judgment. It's hard because we tend to say these are bad -- it's bad to be irritated or to be fearful or to be angry, or it's bad to be desiring or wanting. If we want to learn about them, the key is to be mindful, which is to say, to see and observe them as if you were studying a different person. Say, "Gee, this is an interesting force. How is this operating?" It's also important to see that they're workable. When you identify or label it, it changes from being overwhelming to, "Oh, this is just the dark night of the soul." It's difficult, but you know what to call it. Or in your relationship, instead of saying, "Oh, this is not going right, I should look for another partner," it might be, "Oh, this is just a state of doubt or restlessness. Let me see if I can look at that in myself."

Then the third piece is to make friends with it, to really receive it with your heart as well as your attention, because if you dislike it, even in a subtle way in your heart, when you say, "desire, desire, desire" or "aversion" or whatever, it's not going to go away or change. You won't even learn much about it because you're still in struggle with it. The more that you struggle with pains or experiences, actually the more real they become inside.

The fourth is to observe how it changes -- the more carefully, the better. Maybe you should study one a week. Pick one and observe what does it feel like in the body. How long does it last when you label it? How many labels long? What triggers it to arise? What state usually follows it? What is it like if you're working with desire and you note "desire, desire, desire," or whatever it happens to be? What's the moment like when it stops? I keep thinking of this cartoon that was in mad magazine: Alfred E. Newman was at the blackboard, and he was writing, he was down to about his hundredth time, and it said, "Cessation of desire, cessation of desire, cessation of desire," It was his assignment for that day. Look at and see if you're examining desire or fear or whatever, see what it feels like, and see if you can notice the moment when it changes. Very interesting moment, because at that moment you begin to realize not only its impermanence, but also that it's very impersonal, it comes according to a certain story or forces. It doesn't last very long unless we keep telling the story over and over.

You can practice with little ones. You can practice with annoyance with your partner or your spouse. Practice watching when you feel yourself to be right. Just practice watching for that little

impulse that says, "I'm right." It's a very interesting one. Or practice carefully with certain desires that arise that you know, those are the ones you'd like to learn about, and see what it's like as it arises.

First is to look at key patterns and sort of recognize the territory for yourself. The second is to identify the experience in the moment. The third is to touch it with your heart as well as seeing and labeling it, to really let it in and not condemn it so much. The fourth is to notice how it changes, notice it's process, beginning and end, what comes before and afterward. Take little things to work with; practice easy ones.

The next -- and this is really a key -- is see if you can discover or observe what it hides you from, what it distracts you from, what it covers up, what's the fear. When I said these are all forms of avoidance, if you let yourself feel desire, or fear, or boredom, or doubt, or restlessness, and you observe it, see if you can listen inside yourself a little more deeply, or even on a cellular level somehow, and see what it is that you're moving away from, that you run from. Some of it is moving away from being "just this much," as Achaan Chaa says. We're always at war trying to make life more than it is, make it bigger, or grander, or happier, or sadder, or longer, or shorter, or lighter, or darker.

We move away from hunger, we move away from loneliness, we move away from grief, or unfinished business, or pain in our heart, or the fact that we haven't really been intimate in our relations at times, and that's difficult to acknowledge, so we distract ourselves, or we move away from pains that are unfinished in the past where we haven't forgiven, or meaninglessness, or we move away from fear that things are out of control. They are! Or we move away from space; it gets quiet and the whole sense of oneself which is built on busyness starts to go away, and that's scary, so we distract ourselves.

It's not only to observe the hindrance or the state, but also to listen more deeply and see what you would experience if you let yourself just get here. What might you be avoiding? It's a little bit like going through a layer of ice that's a little painful, if you want to go into the water and explore the depths of it. There's all kinds of amazing things. But you have to stop skating, and then there's a moment where you say, "Whoops, I think I'm going to break through the ice," and you do. It's okay to stop and feel what's actually present. This is a big part of practice, to open your body, to use your breath, your attention, and your heart, and feel what's here, and stop moving; to come to rest in the moment. This is where it gets very delicate. It's called, Watching the Movement of Mind.

I'll close again with something from Achaan Chah. He talks about the Middle Way:

> On one side it's like you're being kicked on one side with desire, and the other is aversion, left and right. One who follows the Middle Way says, "I will not get caught by the pleasure or pain. I will let go of each as they arise, accepting one moment after another. But it's hard. It's as though we're being kicked on both sides, like a cow bell or a pendulum knocked back and forth. We're always besieged by pleasure and pain, and then we follow by a response, "I don't like it, I do like it."

> If you observe this, use your heart for guidance. You'll see that when the heart is in its natural state, it's unattached, it's accepting. When it stirs from the normal it's because of various thoughts and ideas, the process of construction, of images. This is the illusion.
>
> Learn to see this process clearly. When the mind is stirred from its normal state it leads away from this moment into past, into future, into right and wrong, into indulgence and aversion, creating more illusion, more of movement.
>
> Good and bad arise only in the mind. If you keep watch on this, studying this one topic your whole life, I guarantee you'll never be bored.

He says in another place:

> Just take one seat in the middle of the room and don't get up, and see the things as they come and go.

So working with these states in one's sitting practice, in driving in a traffic jam, in the supermarket, in one's marriage, or one's intimate relations, in the workplace -- they're the same forces. Begin to work by identifying them, start to see what your common patterns are, maybe take a look and see what you're avoiding by having them there, and see if you can bring your heart into them as well, because for the most part they arise out of some place of pain. If we can open and soften to that, to kind of melt to it, there's a much deeper place of well-being that is our Buddha-nature, that is our birthright, and it's there for anybody who stops.

This is Emily Dickinson:

> When much in the woods as a little girl,
> I was told that the snake would bite me,
> that I might pick a poisonous flower
> or mushroom, or the goblins would kidnap me.
> But I went along and met none but angels.

I guess the second half will wait until another night. We have a few moments for thoughts, comments, questions. And in the second half we'll take more time because I'd like to hear from you about common hindrances that you discover in your daily life and how you've learned to look at them or work with them.

THE AUDIENCE: A question about depression. I've read that depression can be stated as anger turning inward. Any comments about that, regarding anger being one of the hindrances?

JACK: Is this for yourself particularly?

THE AUDIENCE: Yes.

JACK: So at times you experience depression and you wonder how it relates to anger? Is that it?

THE AUDIENCE: What's going on?

JACK: It is often the case, although not always, that depression is a cover for anger; that one has had some circumstance in life that first brought a lot of pain, and then the response to that pain is anger. If that's unexpressed in people, the energy to keep that anger down is as strong as the anger itself, and it bottles up a great deal of energy, and then one can feel fearful, depressed, lacking any sense of personal empowerment. So often, although not always, in working with depression, you might look to see where you've really cut yourself off from your true feelings or your true inner relationship to things around. That's not the only cause for depression, and it's important to see that it's a very personal process that we're discussing; that there isn't some rote formula. For someone else it might be loss and there might be a bit of anger but there could be some other sense of grief or loss, possibly other reasons as well. So it's more an inquiry. What you might do is look at what time of day it gets the strongest or in what circumstances, and then stop and sit. Say, "Alright, I'm going to feel this," and see what images come, where you feel it in your body, what images might arise.

Do you feel it in your body when you're depressed?

THE AUDIENCE: Yes. Then it becomes sleepiness.

JACK: So you get sleepy. So that's one function. Do you feel it in any particular place?

THE AUDIENCE: All over.

JACK: So then you might sit with that and feel the sleepiness and see what's under that, what would come up if you weren't sleepy. Just pay careful attention. If you really want to go further, see if you can feel the strongest sensation in your body, and then let an image arise, whatever image wants to come out of it that may show you a picture of what that inner conflict really is.

It's a good question.

THE AUDIENCE: What would be an interesting discussion one night is talk about when we're happy. It seems to seduce us away from the inner work. I mean, me.

JACK: What seduces us away?

THE AUDIENCE: Happiness. When I'm feeling really happy and things are going right, some things are going right, it's like, "Well, I might not have time to go to meditation."

JACK: I'd love to talk about happiness some night. I see it much broader than that. That's a very good point, that at times happiness can lead to a kind of complacency. However, there are other kinds of happiness that are very genuine and really nurturing of spiritual life, that touching them actually gives us the strength to deal with difficulties. So it's a whole range, and there can be great joys that come out of spiritual practice as well. Seeing the layer of things that we've avoided, there's a very deep level of joy that can come. It's a good topic to talk about.

THE AUDIENCE: One of the things that hurts me, you naming them, I know all of them, is that it's like I'm paying attention.

JACK: People do have all of them. They're all common human forces that operate in each of us. There may be ones that we tend to have more than another, but they're all the elements of the make-up of the normal human mind. So it's not so much a question of which we have or don't have. Some people have them all at once, what's called, A Multiple Hindrance Attack. What's important in meditation is not what the experience is, but what is our relationship to it as it arises. So as we get to see what are our top ten tunes, and the popular ones for us, then we can also begin to look at whether we can develop a mindful or a skillful or a passionate relationship that leads us to freedom in relation to that. It may be that we all have to work down the list or up the list, depending on where you want to start. I think that's true.

Householder Series: Hindrances of the Householder (II)

We have begun to look at what the Buddhists traditionally call "hindrances" or difficult energies which arise in the mind and in one's life as a part of meditation practice, particularly as householders, and how we might look at them, deal with them, and work with them.

I want to read a passage from an article by a woman named Portia Nelson. It's called *Autobiography in Five Chapters*.

> Chapter One:
> I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I'm lost. I'm helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.
>
> Chapter Two:
> I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I'm in the same place, but it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.
>
> Chapter Three:
> I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there. I fall in. It's a habit. But my eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault and I get out immediately.
>
> Chapter Four:
> I walk down the same street. There's a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.
>
> Chapter Five:
> I try walking down a different street.

It somehow speaks very directly to our human experience which is not that one sees and immediately learns, but that in some sense our spiritual practice and our life of growing in general is a process of making mistakes and confronting our demons, and oftentimes looking at the same patterns and difficulties. They are the forces that the great Christian Desert Father Teacher Evagrius described attacking those people who went out to meditate in the desert in Egypt in the second century A.D. There they talked about them in terms of demons. They would be assailed by the demons of desire, wanting to go back to Alexandria and have a pizza, or whatever they served in Alexandria at that time, or wanting a soft bed, or the demons of aversion and frustration because it was too hot or too cold or what we call the Noonday Demon, which is the demon of sleepiness that would creep up in the middle of the day to want to take them into unconsciousness. Or if you got rid of all those, the demon of pride who would come only after you were successful in routing the

other demons, to say, "See how good I am? I got rid of desire, frustration and anger, and I'm really a good meditator."

Of course, what one discovers is that what was available and in fact a part of meditation in Egypt in the 2nd Century A.D., or in ancient India, or in China, are exactly the same forces, the same demons one encounters here, in our lives, in our work, in our families. As I mentioned, there was an article that articulated this very well that describes the traditional hindrances of desire, anger, judgment, restlessness, sleepiness, laziness and doubt in terms of marriage. In fact, in relating to anything, whether it's our meditation, our work, our financial life, the same states of mind will have the tendency to arise.

What's important to understand is that these very states are the place of practice. The doubt, the fear, the difficulty, the anger, that arise in our life are what make practice juicy. If you could just sit and be peaceful and get up, your meditation wouldn't take you very far in terms of opening a heart of very deep compassion, or in terms of some inner centeredness, a capacity to relate to birth and death -- and all of the changes that are inevitable in life -- with wisdom, with deep understanding.

In the Buddhist tradition there are a number of different strategies for dealing with these hindrances or difficulties. An image that's used is of these hindrances or difficulties being the same as a poisoned tree. One strategy is that you go and find the poisoned tree and you cut it down; you chop it down and try to get rid of it. We'll talk about working with that strategy. A second strategy is to simply put up a sign near the tree that says, "This is a poisoned tree. Don't eat the berries, don't eat the leaves," and instead of killing it, to take shade in it, and to enjoy it for what there is of value in it, to have some friendly relationship to it rather than one based on fear. The third and the most interesting strategy is the person who comes along and says, "Oh, a poisoned tree of this kind, just what I've been looking for. These berries make the best medicine for curing a number of illnesses, including the illness of greed, fear, desire, anger and doubt.

It's the person that takes the very energies that are difficult and learns to work with them or distills them in their own body and heart until something more valuable comes to them. The phrase that Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche used was, " These difficulties are manure for *bodhi*, manure for awakening or enlightenment." The most famous biographer of Sigmund Freud, Lou Andre Salome, at one point in the introduction wrote a statement -- This is a paraphrase. I didn't have it to look up but I basically remember it -- When we look at the life of a great person, rather than condemn their faults and weaknesses, should we not be grateful and awestruck that such light could shine through in spite of them.

It's a very different spirit of relating to difficulties, when seeing them as who we are, to see that there is some light of our being, of our wisdom, of our heart, that can shine through even in the midst of these, even in spite of them.

As we talked about hindrances and difficulties before we found that mostly as they arise they're based on stories we tell ourselves -- he did, she did, they did, I wish, if only -- and as we begin to look at the nature of mind, we can see what storytellers we are. I mean, I'm a storyteller by profession. In part, that's what I do. But I don't think I'm the only storyteller in the room. It goes on

and on inside there.

The stories do a couple of things. They make us right, they make us feel better, they justify, they make us feel more comfortable, and they also help us to avoid feeling things that we don't want to feel, or facing things that are just here in front of us. These hindrances, in a sense, are an avoidance of what is present in the reality of the moment.

One philosopher wrote:

> Millions of people long for immortality who do not know what to do with themselves on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

It's nice to have visions of eternal peace or whatever one's spiritual ends might be, but in fact, it's really more about facing our life each day, each hour, and each moment.

How can we relate when these different forces arise during the day? Here are a number of strategies one can work with in meditation and in one's daily life. The first and the major way to relate in terms of skillfulness is to identify with the present and to become mindful of it, whether it's fear, judgment, anger or desire. If you want to, you can work with mental notes or labels, "fear, fear, judging, judging, anger, anger, irritated, irritated," not just when you're sitting on a cushion, but try it if you're in an argument with somebody, or if you're feeling frustrated over something, or if you feel very confused one morning, note, "Okay, I'll look at this and label it, 'confused, confused,'" and see what that experience is like. To pay attention to it means to let yourself experience what arises in the body, in the feelings, and in the mind, all of them. Confusion might arise and there will be a physical sense with it. It will arise and there will be a certain feeling, a state of being confused. There will be a quality of pleasant or unpleasant. In most cases it will probably be unpleasant. There also might be an aversion or judgment, "I shouldn't be confused. I wish it would go away." If you try to make it go away, what happens? Anybody ever try it? It generally gets worse, plus which you add more judgment, "I shouldn't be judging, I shouldn't be confused, I'm really not doing it right, if only this would go away," and all of a sudden you have four more judgments on top of the first one.

There was a person at a retreat who came to me because she noticed in her mind that in most everything she did there was a voice of judgment. So I asked her in a simple way, a 15-second psychotherapy, what were the first names of her parents. It turns out to be this person and that. Did that voice in her mind remind her of either of those? It could have been someone else, but in this case it happened to be her mother. She grew up in an Italian family. I said, "Alright, every time you hear that voice saying you're not doing it right or you should do more, or whatever, first of all, count the judgments for awhile just to see them." She tried that and she was still fighting with them. I said, "Alright, say 'Thank you, Mom.' Whenever that voice comes, you should do a little bit more, you should get that better, 'Thank you, Mom.'" She said, "That's not really right because I called her 'Mama' and I would have spoken to her in Italian. It's more like 'grazie, Mama.'"

She wrote this note after a couple of days of trying it.

Dear Jack:

The judging process and saying, "Grazie, Mama," was very useful and even became amusing. At one point the judging process of mind seemed to be a giant web of interconnected judgments. Once I started counting them, there were so many. I counted during two sittings all told about 220. Many of them were repeats. But it got to be fun after awhile.

She also had difficulty in walking meditation. She would get bored or frustrated. So I said, "Instead of walking a little bit, do a long walk. Take an hour and a half or two hours and just walk back and forth and die. Whatever arises, you just keep walking."

I also did the hour and a half walking this morning. It was proceeded by an hour sitting in dread anticipation, frustration, anger at you, and irritation at the upcoming walk. The walk itself was like all things, good and awful. The first 15 or 20 minutes I really got into it and thought, "This isn't too bad." Then a lot of aversion came out, mostly impatience, then rage, then calmness, then sort of psychedelic nature stuff, then pride, lots and lots and lots of pride, over and over again, theN planning on what I'd write you in this note, then more pride, I did it so well, then back to my feet and legs and sensations, then irritation, then "Grazie, Mama," again. Then it all started all over.

I noticed that most of my unawareness occurred during the time between sitting and walking, so I realized that's the place for me to focus on next in my practice.

Anyway, after ten years of sporadic vipassana, I touch for a moment into beginner's mind.

Grazie.

The first spirit of it, whatever it is that you're dealing with, whether it's fear, whether it's judgment, whether it's anger, whether it's doubt or confusion, is just to begin to name it and identify it. You might find that it fits your habitual tendency like some people's tendency to move out of the present through desire all the time; others have a tendency through judgment or aversion or disliking; for others it might be through confusion. It's useful just to begin to be aware of what your habit is, what your strategy is. Basically, it's a strategy to deal with what's uncomfortable. For certain people when it's uncomfortable there will come desire, for others there will be aversion, for some there will be spacing out and confusion. Begin to be aware of that and notice just what's there.

As you start to look, like our friend here, you see how amazingly frequent it is, how many mind moments we spend desiring, judging, irritated, sleepiness or doubting. It's really quite a lot. Has anybody ever noticed that? Then you say, "Oh, my God, this is an impossible task. A little mindfulness to overcome all of that?" But it's really universal. It was true in Egypt 2,000 years ago, and it was true in India 2,500 years ago with the Buddha, and it's true in the monasteries on Mt. Athos, it's true in the Zen temples of Japan, and it's true in Fairfax, San Raphael, Sausalito, Berkeley. It's the same thing. It's really universal and it's just part of what the mind does.

There's a book that I've been reading on three-year olds and it's entitled, *Three-Year Old, Friend or Enemy*. It is written by a well-known psychologist writing on this particular stage. Three-year-olds have a lot of aggression and a lot of testing of limits and a lot of periods where they regress and get very needy and they go through all these things. I see myself in her, it's not just that she does that, but there she is acting out all this stuff that I find in myself. There are times when I just get completely frustrated with her and want to just throw her out the window.

I remember teaching at Esalen and there was a whole group of us in one large room. There was some conversation about spiritual life. One of the people there had their child. It was a young two- or three-year-old who was crying and making a lot of noise, being very difficult at that particular time, and finally just started to wail and cry. The mother picked it up and carried him out of the room, and there was this kind of, "Ahh," a relief of everybody in the room. One woman among the many who had children, just said exactly that. She said, "Do you remember the time when you really just wanted to pick them up and throw them out the window, and you didn't care how far down it was to the street?" Everybody in the room who had children laughed because they all remembered that moment. It's not that you do it, mind you, but that it just comes along with everything else that arises.

What you need to do is to see that it's human and begin to look at it directly anyway, to label it, to acknowledge, "Well, there it is, there's aversion, there's irritation, there's judgment, there's confusion" or "there's fear." Actually, when we see it truly, the moment that we can name it, it's like we turn around and face it rather than being caught or running away. We say, "Oh, I know you." Maybe it's the dark night instead of psychosis, or maybe it's just boredom after being with a person for some years. Instead of saying, "Oh, I've got the wrong relationship" or the wrong marriage, when you don't face it, it seems much bigger and worse, but when you turn around and actually look at it, it's not as bad as it seemed.

That's the first step. Things become workable when you simply acknowledge what that energy is that has arisen in that time in your life, in your practice. To work with these forces, in addition to naming them and being aware of them, you really have to let yourself touch them with your heart. It's not just to name it, but somehow it's to let it in, to let yourself connect with it from a place of tenderness or caring, somehow to make friends with it or at least not to be upset or judgmental of it, whatever it is.

If you find that there's anger, or fear, or desire, maybe it's your food craving, and you eat over and over again, and you say, "Oh, I wish I didn't do it," or maybe it's the way you treat your body in some other fashion, maybe it's the relationship with some person in your life, you look at it and say, "Ugh, I hate that." See if you can acknowledge what that state is. Is it judgment, is it aversion, is it dislike, is it fear, and then in acknowledging it, send some loving kindness, send some *metta* to it or embrace it. Let your heart connect with it as if it were a poor down-trodden dog or something like that, that generally whenever it came you kicked it, and instead you are going to be nice to it today and touch it in some way with more tenderness. If we can't let things into our heart, we don't really let ourselves grow and there is still some sense of aversion or trying to get over them or rid of them.

See it and identify it, let yourself be touched by it without pushing it away, and as you open to it,

notice its nature and then study it as if you were a botanist or a biologist. It's a part of the nature of mind. It's what every mind does. Every mind doubts, every mind gets restless, every mind gets confused, every mind judges. Anybody who doesn't have all of those things? Not a single person back there.

So you look at its nature. When does it begin? What's the middle of it? How intense does it get? What's its end like? Is there something you want to learn about? What's the most powerful point of it? What are the body sensations like, if you want to learn to deal with this particular energy? What triggers it, what's the thought or the image that generally comes right before it? What's the story line that goes along with it? There you are driving and you're annoyed by some driver for doing something for the umpteenth time. What's the story that goes through your mind? "California drivers are this . . ." or "People who drive on the road should . . ." or what is it? Just look at not only what the event is but what's that inner thing that triggers it. See what the story is. Just look at it, and then ask yourself one other question. Who is making up the story? Very useful question at that moment. It's really beginning to observe the movement or the dance of the mind.

This is called, "The Cosmic Dance" or in other traditions, "The Dance of Shiva," or "The Dance of Maya."

> The restless waters of the lake appear to make the moon dance.

It's our own storytelling that makes things move. You pay attention and you watch its beginning, its end, its nature, what it feels like in the body, if it is painful, if it is pleasant. If you want to learn, if you have some hindrance or difficulty in your life that you want to learn about, particularly study the moment when it just ends. Suppose it's desire. We'll take a simple one. You have a desire for something you want to eat. Maybe you have a chocolate craving, and you decide to go out and get an extraordinary triple fudge Swiss chocolate cake, or whatever it is, and you fantasize and you imagine, and finally you get to that place that specializes in catering to people just like you. They know you're coming and they put all the extras on, and there it is. Instead of just going for the cake, this time you're going to watch. You feel the desire in the body, you watch the salivation in the mouth, you imagine the pictures and the satisfaction. You really let yourself look at it and you feel it. It's tense. In that very craving, there's a certain amount of tension and pain. That's alright, you're going to get it satisfied. You get in your car, you go to the ultimate bakery and you get that thing. You don't even take it to your car. You sit down at the table, you take your first bite, and then all of a sudden there's this whole shift that happens in your body. From this place of tension, it all just softens and relaxes. That chocolate touches your tongue and it melts some in your mouth, it tastes delicious, it's really good. At that point, it almost doesn't matter whether you have any more than that. That's probably just about enough. If you watch, the desire moves at that moment and the desire ends. Why is that? Anybody have an answer? Because the great happiness of it is not just the pleasure, although there's pleasure and that comes from sense delight, a certain happiness, but the great happiness comes because the desire ends.

If you want to learn something really powerful about the mind or about particular energies that are arising in your life, whether it's in relation to food, people, love, work, look at it and discover what happens at the moment in your mind when that anger, that confusion, that doubt at a certain

moment ends -- it is a very, very interesting place to study. There is where you learn a lot about its nature.

It doesn't happen easily. Whatever this is, it requires practice. How many times have these states arisen in our lives? Countless, unbelievable number of times. So you practice. Maybe you start with little ones. Remember that quote of William Blake?

> If one is to do good,
> it must be done in the minute particulars.
> General good is the plea of the hypocrite,
> the scoundrel and the flatterer.

To do anything well, it has to be done here immediately, in this moment, rather than with some ideal -- "I'll get rid of this," or "I'll change the world." How do we actually relate to our family, to the people nearest to us, to our coworkers, to the people that we encounter in the day, or to the immediate circumstances of our life? I regret to say this about Mr. Blake, but I also have a quote from Catherine, his wife, who was asked about William, particularly about the quality of his company. She replied:

> I regret to say I have very little of Mr. Blake's company. He's always busy in paradise

Some person who I know whom I will not name said:

> If you really want to know about a master, a Zen master or otherwise, talk to their spouse.

Actually, this was a woman. She said, "Talk to their wife," but there are a number of female Zen masters. That's really where you learn about yourself, and that's also where you learn about what it means to be free. It's not in the theory but in the nitty-gritty, in the little things. In traffic, as I said, when somebody cuts you off or does some idiotic thing which only a human being could do, and they do it, that's the place that you learn. You have that argument with your lover or your husband. Maybe you come home and you know you want to argue. Have you ever seen that one? If you look at it, there is a desire to make contact, but not too close. It's sort of a safe way to make a connection and still keep some distance at the same time, or maybe to discharge something because you're grumpy at someone else, or some other reason. These are very interesting places to learn about our minds, to learn about how things operate.

The desire to be right, you might just listen for that voice. I don't know if any of you have that. I just love to be right, it feels so good to be right. Do you know what I mean? You notice that voice that comes, and you feel its quality, what's it like in the body, what does it do in that moment to the relationship, and what is the sense of self that is built around that story that I'm right and therefore somebody else is not. You look at it.

This isn't anything new, is it? There's nothing new in tonight's talk. It's really old stuff. Here it is again. It's the nature of mind, and we're learning to relate to mind in a friendly, compassionate and

wise way, not to stomp it out or get rid of it. You need it for certain things, like planning a few things here and there, writing once in awhile. It has its place.

What is interesting is watching as you begin to allow yourself to look at these energies and not just act them out habitually. You might just pick one for the next week or two. Pick one hindrance or difficulty in your life and study it. Maybe we can have a little botany lab work here. At the end of a couple of weeks we could have a meeting and we'll share. We'll have a little time and people can share which particular hindrance they picked and what they learned about it as they observed it.

As you look you also discover that each has a beautiful side. Isn't that interesting, that each has some creative energy locked up in it? For example, the Tibetans talk about those forces of greed, hatred and delusion, in terms of Buddha families or types of personality energies -- if you will, archetypes. The *padma* energy, which is that of greed and seduction, when one learns to work with it and doesn't get quite so personally caught up in it, turns instead to incredible creativity and a beautiful sense of esthetics and beauty that's not oriented toward manipulation or grasping but can be part of something creative and skillful. Or the *vajra* type of mind which is in its negative or its difficult aspect portrayed as cold, hard, judgmental, and seeing what's wrong with everything, when one learns to work with that energy and open it and not be so afraid and learns how to use it skillfully, it becomes transformed into what's called "discriminating wisdom." Instead of being something that's undermining, it's the clarity of mind to see exactly what is going on and to know how to relate to it wisely. It is depicted as the sword which cuts through all illusion and all nonsense. Similarly, the Buddha family type which is associated with delusion and being spaced out, not being so present, avoiding things, when one learns to work with that energy and allows it without getting caught in the story, it moves to a place of great peacefulness, of spaciousness, of a kind of mirror-like quality which can receive everything in the world without doing battle with it.

What if these things are strong, what if desire, fear, anger, judgment and so forth, are very strong, and it's really too hard to pay attention, how can you work with them? There are five traditional strategies that are also listed as ways to work with them.

The first strategy is called, "Letting it go." It arises, you see it, and you just let it go. Terrific if you can do it. The thing is it is not so easy to do. There's also a danger in it that letting go of the judgment, or the desire, or the fear, or whatever, often gets twisted in our minds a little bit until it becomes, "I can't wait to let go of this," which is to say, "I can't wait to get rid of it." It becomes an aversion, "I don't like that." A better phrase for it is to "let it be," better than "letting go," more the quality of "letting be." To be mindful and just see it, see that "it's mine," and let it into the heart rather than resisting it.

What is interesting if you let things be is first of all they come and go on their own. It's quite terrific if you really watch them. They do that all by themselves. Secondly, if you pay attention and you really let them be and let them in, what you see is not so much greed, hatred, delusion, desire or restlessness. Even those, deep though they are, are something more superficial or on some medium level, and underneath what you touch when those arise is pain, emptiness, loneliness, fear, some grief or sorrow, or some kind of contraction. All those things arise as a strategy to not feel something.

When you let them be, it's not only to let that state be, but to really open yourself to feel what is present, and to soften your heart enough so that you can get just to the bottom of it, whatever that particular energy is, and that's what begins to heal you. That's what begins to allow you to work with it in a different way. That's the first strategy. Suppose that doesn't work, what other ones can you use?

There's a second one. That first strategy is like turning the poison into something valuable, into insight. That's the strategy of making it into a useful medicine. A second strategy is one of balance. For example, if there is a great deal of desire, you can reflect on the brevity of life, on death and impermanence, and think, "Is this something I really want?" or "What really matters to me? If I only had another month or another six months to live, what would I be wanting to do with my body, heart and mind? How would I want to live?" Very often it puts desires into perspective. The balance for doubt is faith, to seek out some inspiration. If there's confusion and doubt, to read something or to speak with someone -- it just reminds you of another part of yourself that's a counter to that ,so then you come into enough balance to watch it.

The balance for anger and judgment -- and it's a difficult one -- is forgiveness. You can't do it too soon, but some time when you're ready. At first you can extend maybe a little, and then maybe a little more, with forgiveness to yourself or to another person. You can work with forgiveness when the anger is too strong to just observe.

The balance to sleepiness or laziness is to do those things which raise energy.

This set of strategies, if it's too strong, you can kind of cool it out a little by raising energy when you feel yourself being too sleepy or dull, or by working with forgiveness when the anger is too strong to just observe.

The third strategy is suppression. Very interesting that this should be listed in here. It is generally talked about as a bad thing. You don't want to suppress things because it makes you sick and it just comes out some other way anyway. This is like the old adage of counting to ten when something is difficult. You just stop and you count to ten.

I'll give you a better example. Suppose you are a surgeon and you're in the middle of having an argument with your husband. You're on call that day and your beeper goes off. He did something, and you're quite upset. It's time to go the hospital. You get in your car and drive right over. Someone is lying on the table and they need open heart surgery. You get scrubbed, you get your gloves on, and you're about to do surgery. That's not a very good place to ruminate and think about that argument and try and finish it up. That's a very good place to put it aside and just complete your task of surgery and wait until there is a skillful place, a place that's the right container, where it feels safe, where there's the support or the time to let yourself solve it. Sometimes it is a skillful strategy, when something is very strong, to put it aside, especially if you're willing to say, "I will come back to it when a better or a safer opportunity arises after this circumstance is over." It requires patience.

There's letting things be and being aware of them, that's the first one. Bringing some balance is the

second. The third strategy is suppress them if necessary or put them aside for awhile. The fourth is sublimation, taking the energy and transforming it into something else.

The traditional example, if you're very angry, is to take that and do something useful with it, to go and chop the firewood that you need for the woodstove for the winter and get some of it out of your system, let go of it and also do something useful. That's externally. Internally, you can work with it in the same way. For example, if there is a lot of lust and sexual desire that's really compulsive, just as you can move it outwardly, you can also through some practice move the energy in your body and take it from being just sexual up into your chest and heart in some way that the desire is still there but it is transformed more into the desire to be loved or to love or to connect in some way. It is to find some other outlet for it that is skillful.

The last of these categories is the most interesting and dangerous one They actually get more dangerous as you go down the list because suppression is dangerous if you don't work it out later, and sublimation is dangerous also or can be because it can be an avoidance. The most dangerous, but also the most interesting, is the category where you exaggerate it. If you haven't learned, it is, "Alright, let's do it; let's look at it." I don't mean particularly if it is going to be harmful to someone. There are two ways to do this. First is just put in your mind Part A, where you take that desire or anger, whatever it is, and you imagine taking it to its extreme. What would you do? How far can you imagine taking it? Instead of resisting it, you play it out to the umpteenth degree. The only way that this is a spiritual practice is if you do it and you pay attention. If you do it and you're not very mindful, then it is reinforcing it and pretty soon you'll go after that unconsciously. It can be done very skillfully. If you have that desire or that anger, imagine what you would do to that person. If you have a desire and imagine getting it a hundred times as elaborate as can be -- see what it's like. There, you've ended the 100th time, and how do you feel? There you are in the same place. Does it arise again? Can you really see that it's endless if you just try to fulfill it?

The second part, Part B, is to actually act it out, which we do all the time anyway. It's nothing terrible to say that most of the time we act on our desires, and that's fine. Even for these difficult ones, go out and indulge that thing, whatever it is, see, but just do it by paying attention as well, and learn from it -- not just automatically.

The story I usually tell with this is one of Munindra, Joseph Goldstein's teacher in India, who had this incredible craving for Indian sweets, particularly for gulabjaman. Gulabjaman are so sweet, they're in this sugar water and they make baklava seem like dry toast. He loved them. After each meal he would want to go and have his gulabjaman. Finally, he was tired of this craving, so he went into town, brought some money with him, and he ordered something like 20 or 30 rupees of gulabjaman, this enormous plate full of it. He sat down. I don't know how far he got into it, but I don't think he could eat very much before he started getting really sick, and certainly sick of gulabjaman. After that he said he could take it or leave it, as one would say.

If you're going to do it, okay, pay attention. At least learn from it. As one Zen master said:

> This life is a series of mistakes. True practice is one continuous mistake, one after another anyway.

The only difference is that you pay attention so you learn from it.

I hope you can hear in going through these strategies of letting it be, of observing it, feeling it in the body, of noticing what the loneliness or pain or fear or contraction is out of which it comes, of sublimating it or transforming it in some way, or even acting it out and observing it, that if you're willing to do it with the experience or particular hindrance in your life, it starts to make the practice quite alive. That is where it becomes juicy, where you learn from it. It frees a tremendous energy. Instead of running away or acting habitually, you start to evoke and allow this inner energy that's been bound up in these patterns to be understood and to become more a part of your conscious being.

In all of these, in all of them, what's important is to learn to watch the movement of mind, the mind that wants to close or is afraid, that wants to defend itself or to avoid opening to the fact of whatever is actually here, to the "just this much" of the moment, to the spaciousness of it or the meaningless of it in certain moments, or the emptiness of it, or the birth and death of it, the loss, and the next thing that comes.

The whole process of working with these states of mind and these energies, is to finally learn to come to rest, to open to this moment, one after another, as it is, and find a kind of stillness that allows for all the coming and going of the ten thousand joys and the ten thousand sorrows, and it brings an ease and humanness and compassion.

I close by reading a letter. This is from one of Munindra's students, a woman who was in a prisoner of war camp in Europe during World War II, and involved at that time in very painful and horrible things that were happening in the war camps in Europe. She finally escaped as a teenager at the end of the war and moved to Australia. She wrote him this letter after doing some years of meditation practice. She said:

> A few weeks ago I was sorting out old files with notes and stories and thoughts which I had written down over the years. Reading through them before destroying them, I was more amazed than I have ever been in my life of so much misery and unhappiness. How is it possible that a human being could live for 55 years through so much fear, despair, unhappiness, morbidity, depression, pain, suffering, and not be utterly destroyed by it? I must have been stronger than I thought. And when I look back over the past four years, since the first time I came to practice in India, life has become simple and so serene that it's unbelievable.

She's a very fine yogi. She is one of Munindra's greatest students.

> After reaching the first deep stages in my mental development, I lost my depression. My headaches, fears and nightmares went away, and after doing deep practice for another year, during my second visit to you, I don't even understand anymore what all the fuss was about, those first 55 years of my life.
>
> I just live life as it is and as it comes in a calm wholeness with some equanimity and I

> find myself content with whatever arises. Sometimes I meditate, sometimes I don't meditate at all, but you see my life has become more of a meditation because I try to live each minute of the day in mindfulness and openness, and somehow nothing seems to be able to touch me in the same way anymore. It's like living on two levels. The outer level to make conversation with people and say the right things at the right time, but under that is a second level where there is a core of untouched and untouchable stillness, of quiet attention and peace, because somehow life is so simple, uncomplicated, and all those old upheavals were after all really just of my own making, weren't they. You only get upheaval through the ways you react to things, and once you react the right way, the direct and simple way, there aren't problems left, and somehow the right way of reacting is most of the time not reacting at all.
>
> I hope this makes some sense to you. I'll tell you a little story to show you what an enormous success you are as a teacher.

I think her success was that she had suffered so deeply in some way that she brought that strength and that genuineness that had gotten her through that to her spiritual life. She said:

> A few months ago the man who I love more than any in the world, and who was for the past 17 years as close to me as any man and woman could be, died rather suddenly. If that had happened before you started to teach me, I'm sure it would have completely destroyed me. I would have committed a quick suicide and ended it all. But now of course I felt sorrow about losing this man's close love for me and I missed his company, but for the rest, a stone thrown in the water would have caused more ripples than his death.
>
> I accepted his death with an amazing serenity and detachment. He's just finished this life trip of his and they have already started another one. I don't know that, but apart from this personal loss and his companionship, there isn't the kind of upset and conflict in me about death. I am not afraid as I used to be.
>
> Apparently I've always been able to see and understand other people's problems and help them somehow, but in the old days other people's miseries tore out my heart and gave me stomach ulcers in my pity and concern for them. But now when people come to see me with their miseries, I can listen to them, sometimes help them, and have a much deeper compassion, but when they leave, it's over and done with, and they haven't torn my guts out in the process.
>
> I've been working with an alcoholic this past month or so, and for some odd reason my willingness to listen seems to help him in his struggle to stay away from alcohol and find his true spirit again.
>
> I think you can be proud of yourself as a teacher and content with me as your pupil.

There is something really wonderful and joyful about working even with the pains and difficulties

in one's life and mind, for that moment when you realize, "For that little thing, I don't have to take it so seriously. I really can be free to touch that." It makes practice wonderful.